

The Principles of Packing

A case study of
two travelling
exhibitions from
1947-9

University of Cape Town

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*A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Art
Michaelis School of Fine Art
University of Cape Town*

by

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Date: 19 October 2012

Course code: FIN5004W

DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature:

Date:

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ABSTRACT

The travelling exhibition was formalised in a series of manuals, *The Organization of Museums: Practical Advice* (Museums and Monuments Series, IX) published by UNESCO as recently as the 1960s. Promoted as a utility for societies seeking to mediate rapid cultural change to one another in the period following the Second World War, my study highlights how certain elements of this display genre could be seen as inherent to all exhibitions: firstly, that carefully selected objects have the power to transport ideological and aesthetic values; secondly, that exhibitions are transient objects, in themselves worthy of study, as constructs of logistical, conceptual, public and political bolts and joints; and thirdly, that exhibition curators often play the role of diplomat – negotiating and mediating meaning across borders of various kinds.

Though seemingly an obscure example, the large-scale international exchange of the *Exhibition of Contemporary British Paintings and Drawings* (1947-8) and the *Exhibition of Contemporary South African Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture* (1948-9) between the colonial centre and so-called ‘periphery’ of the South African Union, is a complex case study within a certain trajectory of travelling exhibitions. Never dealt with previously, the occurrence of such an exchange is significant not only because of its political context – in an immediate post-war, pre-apartheid moment – but also because many of the curatorial strategies used in the exchange process are heralded in UNESCO’s manual of *Travelling Exhibitions* (1953).

To unpack this British-South African colonial freight could be easily regarded as a ‘merely’ art historical or archival gesture. If however, we understand the archive to be an historically determined framework within which to arrange cultural knowledge (Hamilton 2011), then an archive of travelling exhibitions makes both actual and contingent those cultural arrangements – the transient curatorial ‘principles of packing’ (UNESCO 1963). This project asserts that whether or not an exhibition is designated as such, travelling, as both an approach and the effect of curatorship, becomes the utility for mobilising not only objects but also ideas between contexts as seemingly disparate as those of the 1940s exhibitions or in today’s expansive ‘art worlds’.

Borrowing its title from a chapter in UNESCO's manual, this project resists the embeddedness of content in a supposedly unalterable history, and attempts to dislodge the case study's macro- and micro-structures – versioning, rearranging, 'cooking' them (Greenblatt 1990) in a contemporary context. The written component of my work appropriates the form of a stock book – an unbound, open organisational system for recording an exhibition process – offering a narrative of the British-South African case study. The stock book should be read however, in the context of a longer Appendix, which, rather than acting as an afterthought or illustrative supplement, offers a set of provisional conclusions generated by my own exchange, across time, with the objects and issues located (temporarily) in the case study. What results is a record of diplomatic curatorial engagement wherein the exhibition becomes a shifting site of visible negotiations; where the givenness of 'taste' and 'expertism' is objectified, scrutinised; and a border's porosity is the only fixed point.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks go to the following people and groups for their role in the realisation of this project:

MFA supervisors, Professors Pippa Skotnes and Carolyn Hamilton; colleagues at the Centre for Curating the Archive, Michaelis School of Fine Art, and the Archive and Public Culture Research Initiative workshops at the University of Cape Town; my Art Therapy Group, Lynne Aschmann, Sandra Boerngen, Sue, Siân and Joshua Butcher, Anthea Buys, Professor Deborah Cherry, Denzil and Janet Cochrane, Professor Sher Doruff, Professor Michael Godby, Leslie Jogi, Emilio Moreno, Christian Nerf, Hayden Proud, Kathryn Smith, and all of those who shared their time and ideas over countless meals.

This project was undertaken under the auspices of the Centre for Curating the Archive and the Archive and Public Culture Research Initiative. Further thanks goes to the following institutions for their generous support and assistance: the ARC: Visual University and its Columbarium, the British Council Archives, the Iziko South African National Gallery Archives, the Stedelijk Museum Archives, the Tate Gallery Archives, the University of Cape Town.

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INTRODUCTION

It all starts and ends with a pink wall. A pink wall and some correspondence by letter. The letter is from Esther Pissarro, wife of the neo-impressionist painter, Lucien Pissarro. On the 22nd of September 1948, just two days after the opening of the *Exhibition of Contemporary South African Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture* at the Tate Gallery in London, she wrote to the director John Rothenstein, querying the choice of the exhibition's wall colour. It was pink. It distracted attention away from the foreign works on show. It was an experiment, replied the director, and one for which he was personally to blame.¹

If one thinks about the structures making up any exhibition – wall colour being one of them, the select objects on display another, there is also lighting, the level of detail on title cards, the turnstiles at the front of the gallery, the temperature – all of these are meant to act as a whole, bound together by a certain conceptual, chronological or geographic framework. Why the exhibition is there in other words.

Many museum exhibitions and the strategic work supporting them attempt to create a sense of permanence in the display. The invisible work of conservation and the curatorial masking of contingencies – saying 'this display

1. See letters between John Rothenstein and Esther Pissarro, 22-9-48, 23-9-48.

2. See Johannes Fabian's (1983) *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object*.

has never been otherwise' – engender what might be called a universal present that is neither specifically antiquated nor completely contemporary...it simply is.²

But there are other kinds of exhibitions. The temporary kind. The travelling kind. The kind that move in time and in space. The structures surrounding these exhibitions cannot be permanent or invisible because they appear, suddenly, as contrived things, as interruptions, in galleries, public squares, warehouses, and fairgrounds. And while the objects on show may be precious and outlast their display cases, they all share in the exhibition's short lifespan and otherwise-ness.

In temporary and travelling exhibitions, display panels are often made out of easily moveable, cheaper materials not meant to last. Lights are often brought in especially. Turnstiles spin briefly with curious visiting publics. And the motivations that went into the selection and packing of such object collections must somehow be unpacked – physically and conceptually – in varying conditions of reception. The contingencies and possibilities of such exhibitions are potentially, endless.

Bringing us back to the pink wall.

The *Exhibition of Contemporary South African Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture* which opened at the Tate Gallery in September 1948 before touring to Europe, Canada and the United States, was the reciprocal exhibition in the largest international exchange of expressly 'contemporary art' between South Africa and Britain to that date. The word 'reciprocal' contains the Latin roots 're' and 'pro', or back and forward. It is this hither and thither movement which comes to define the complex curatorial, cultural and political relationships established in the making of the *Exhibition of Contemporary British Paintings and Drawings*, which toured South Africa between 1947 and 1948, and its aforementioned response.

Yet these exhibitions remain obscure (read: unknown) save for a brief mention in Esmé Berman's seminal *Art & Artists of South Africa: An Illustrated Biographical Dictionary and Historical Survey of Painters, Sculptors & Graphic Artists Since 1875* (1970) where she lists

the 'Overseas Exhib. [sic] of SA Art, Tate Gal. London' (1970:xv) alongside the first post-war Venice Biennale and the defeat of General Smuts by DF Malan in South African elections.

The British Council's³ sending of an exhibition comprising over 100 artworks representative of a 'contemporary' moment in the colonial centre following the devastation of World War II presented an important diplomatic opportunity for both the South African Union Government, still under Smuts, and the local arts community to position themselves on a more international stage. While the British exhibition could be seen as something of a hand shake, saying thank you to South Africa for its efforts during the war,⁴ the exchange was a window through which the Union might project itself in a new light.⁵

The South African Association of Arts⁶ and a selection committee of 'non-technical experts' (Cape Times, 2 March 1948), under the highly-regarded, though quite experimental, curatorial guidance of the Tate director John Rothenstein, were thus commissioned by the State to put together a travelling exhibition that would uphold 'South Africa's reputation as an art producing nation' (SAAA, 26 April 1948).

And over the course of two years, the exhibitions passed between contemporaneous nations along the changing axes of power not only in the British Empire, but in the world at large.⁷ For the purposes of this thesis I have chosen to focus on the exhibition exchange in regard to the Cape Town-London axis specifically. While both the British and the South African shows travelled more extensively, the available information concerning the processes and execution on these two sites serves to expose the intermingling of realpolitik with the cultural sphere within that period (Taylor 1999:153), while also signalling a shift in the capacity of the exhibition (not only travelling ones) as a diplomatic tool, in a wider sense.

...visual presentation offers an international means of communication in which language barriers begin to disappear... Surely a deeper understanding

3. *The British Council was founded in 1934 with the mandate of making 'British life more widely known abroad' while encouraging 'other countries to make themselves better known in Britain.'* (Adam 1948:3) *It was expressly non-political as an organisation, interpreting "Britishness" to other countries through the medium of Culture (capital C). One interesting statement by the Chairman of the British Council made in his introduction to the Exhibition of Contemporary British Paintings and Drawings (1947-8) catalogue states that 'the structure of peace depends to a great extent on international friendship and understanding' – this "understanding" was based on the interchange of cultural products* (Adam 1948: 3).

4. *To a large extent, the exhibition by the British Council can be seen as a reaching out to South Africa from Britain – a 'thank you' for its help in the War. It should also be seen in context with the Royal Visit to South Africa in 1947 (notes from Ouma Lunch with Professor Michael Godby, 26/08/11).*

5. *This follows the efforts made in the Empire Exhibition of 1936 in which South Africa sought to 'open the eyes of the rest of the Empire' (Robinson 2003:761): aligning her progress and up-to-date-ness with that of Europe while at the same time coming to terms with internal, fragmented cultural logics. Perhaps what Stuart Hall refers to as ascending and descending 'small nationalisms' (1999:38) is useful here, in accounting for the various constituents involved in the imagining of this 'corporate nation-state' (1999: 38) under a flailing imperial umbrella.*

6. *The South African Society of Artists was formed in 1902 and had a more or less open door policy to artists of both academic and amateur backgrounds resulting in the accusation of a lack of quality control. The South African Association of Art (SAAA) emerged in 1945 as an alternative, favouring what was seen to be more avant-garde, or "contemporary" work.*

7. See Fisher's (1994) seminal anthology, *Global Visions: Towards a New Internationalism in the Visual Arts for a description of the origins of internationalism in post-war contemporary art*.

8. During the inter-war years, the Union of South Africa had in fact become more and more of a player in the game of international alliances under Jan Smuts's leadership (see Dubow 2006). Considering Smuts's proposal in 1917 of a Commonwealth of Nations comprising the Empire's dominions, coupled with his pivotal role in establishing both the League of Nations and the United Nations, the making of an exchange exhibition between Britain and South Africa of 1947-9 which sought to attain UNESCO standards, comes as no surprise (see Case Study section for more details).

9. See Tony Bennett's description of the 'the exhibitionary complex' (1988) in *modernising Europe*, as it 'involved the transfer of objects and bodies from the enclosed and private domains in which they had previously been displayed (but to a restricted public) into progressively more open and public arenas where, through the representations to which they were subjected, they formed vehicles for inscribing and broadcasting the messages of power (but of a different type) throughout society' (1988:74).

between peoples should assist in lessening tensions which ultimately flare into international conflicts.
(UNESCO 1963:59)

Not long after the completion of these exhibitions' tours (which saw varying degrees of success), the newly formed cultural body of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) began issuing a set of manuals *The Organization of Museums: Practical Advice* (Museums and Monuments Series, IX) –seeking to standardise exhibition-making amongst its member states with their disparate infrastructures. One particular manual pertains to the making of *Temporary and Travelling Exhibitions* (UNESCO 1963), first published in 1953 and then revised ten years later to include the making of temporary exhibitions.⁸

Based on the underlying assumption of a causal relationship between displays of objects and cultural knowledge,⁹ the efficacy of travelling displays of objects was promoted by UNESCO as a means of expanding one community's awareness 'of the cultural achievements of other peoples' (1963:9), thereby reducing the risk of inter-cultural tensions or misunderstandings. With the increasing number of exhibition exchanges between institutions not only on a national but on an international scale after WWII, it was perceived that those in 'remote places' (UNESCO 1963:58) where suitable cultural institutions were rare, would become the beneficiaries of knowledge as well as given access to the 'enjoyment of the arts' usually reserved for the "centres" in which great museums and exhibitions were the norm (1963:56).

'The possible utility of temporary exhibitions in countries which are undergoing rapid social and cultural change,' (UNESCO, 1963:10) required a greater flexibility in exhibition formats (museums included). With the decreased possibility of sole financial sponsorship by the State, public investment in terms of return visits and general interest had also become paramount. Generally speaking, these circumstances necessitated new modes of presenting collections of objects that moved beyond the fatigued forms of permanent exhibition and dusty displays.

In the manual series, these new modes of presentation are outlined in an extremely practical manner by the UNESCO authors who touch on everything from the use of reproductions to insure against damage during freighting, to the spacing of letters on a piece of signage. Not only was it believed that these methods would mediate the daily realities of different “peoples” – the form of the presentation itself would also bring publics into close spatial and temporal proximity with these people’s current circumstances, ‘mingled inheritances’ (Greenblatt 2010:7) and future aspirations.

As seen by the intervention of the pink wall in the South African exhibition at the Tate, geographic distance and language barriers are not the only determining factors of an exhibition’s success or failure to communicate. This exposing of an exhibition’s structure serves to, in a sense, make tangible the physical and figurative travelling done by all exhibitions wherein carefully selected objects are believed to transport aesthetic as well as ideological values; and curators attempt to mediate meaning across borders of various kinds. When understood in this way, the pink wall is no longer a distraction or failed experiment, but rather evidence of the contingency of object-ive authority and the many shades of diplomacy.¹⁰

In its noun form, the word ‘diplomat’ means someone who officially represents a place or person abroad. And in fact, if we are to look at the history of exhibitions we see that this kind of diplomacy extends much further back than the UNESCO manuals, or our case study, to the *translatio imperii* during the demise of the Roman Empire whereby relics and paraphernalia from the imperial centre were transported for display in sites of intended conquest as a form of symbolic border-extension in lieu of the physical presence of the emperor himself (Greenblatt 2010:7).

As an adjective however, ‘diplomatic’ describes someone who, because of their presence, is able to facilitate potentially polemic circumstances in a sensitive and effective way. And indeed, the co-presence of certain actors and support systems becomes extremely important if we are to think about exhibitions as things which must

10. In his chapter on ‘Resonance and Wonder’ (1990), Stephen Greenblatt reflects on the way we are schooled to regard all ‘aesthetic and political wholes as sacrosanct.’ (1990:223) However, the ‘new historicist’ position advocates the transformative power of conditions and labour in the constructing of possible histories, saying that ‘everything can be different from what it is; everything could have been different than what it was’ (Greenblatt 1990:223).

11. See Gerardo Mosquera (1994) *'Some Problems of Transcultural Curating'*.

12. See Timothy Mitchell (1989) *'The World As Exhibition'*.

13. See Mari Carmen Ramírez's (1996) *'Brokering Identities: Art curators and the politics of cultural representation'*; as well as Donald Preziosi's (1998, 2nd ed. 2009) discussion around the relationship of grand exhibitions to developing globalisation and *'the fundamental problem of incommensurability: the possibility and feasibility of finding common denominators between disparate modes of knowledge both within and between societies and cultural traditions'* (2009:405).

14. See for example, Julien Myers's (2011) article, *'On the Value of A History of Exhibitions'*; Reesa Greenberg et al. (1996) *Thinking About Exhibitions*; Steven Dubin's (2006) *Mounting Queen Victoria: Curating Cultural Change*; Theresa Gleadowe's (2011) *'Inhabiting Exhibition History'*; and Minhea Mircan's (2010) *'Art History, Interrupted'*; See Hal Foster's (2004) *'Archival Impulse'* and Dieter Roelstraete's (2009) *'The Way of the Shovel: On the Archaeological Imaginary in Art'*.

15. Conceptual artist Daniel Buren observed in the early 1970s that, *'more and more the subject of an exhibition tends not to be the display of artworks, but the exhibition of the exhibition as a work of art.'* (Buren 1972)

be packed and unpacked in and out of particular contexts. The risks are great. Meaning may be lost in the process of translation. The power relation between the curator and the curated is often unequal.¹¹ We could consider the Grand Exhibitions for instance, which flattened a world of cultural representations onto one plane of visibility.¹² The world is round however, and if we take seriously the dangers as well as the possibilities offered by a travelling approach to exhibition-making, then curatorial diplomacy may often become a kind of cultural brokerage.¹³

Finally, the word *'diplomatic'* is also used when referring to an exact or faithful copy of an original version (Oxford Dictionary 2010), which brings us to a set of interconnected curatorial challenges: that of accurately relocating cultural material in disparate contexts, as well as the issue of re-presenting historical exhibitions from a temporal distance.

The latter may be regarded as *'merely'* art historical or *'only'* archival in its importance. And though an increasing amount of art historical and critical literature pertaining to the revisiting of historical exhibitions has emerged in recent years,¹⁴ when attending to that history using the mode of exhibition itself we tread on fairly conceptual terrain.¹⁵

However, if we understand the archive to be an historically determined framework within which to arrange cultural knowledge (Hamilton 2011), of both political and epistemological value – then an archive of travelling exhibitions, while instantiating its own barriers, offers itself as a alternative and contingent organisational structure, worthy of diplomatic engagement (in the broadest sense). Challenging the claustrophobia of determined or unalterable historical configurations, that archive also disturbs the notion of embedded objects (Greenblatt 1990) and culturally fixed points. While a travelling approach to making as well as thinking exhibitions allows us to speculate on the processes, props and potentialities of histories, the *'dispositif'* at our disposal.

This project therefore takes its title, and a number of other cues, from the UNESCO manual's chapter *'The Principles of Packing'*, which provided practitioners with

clear instructions for the careful handling of ‘irreplaceable objects’ (1963:9)¹⁶ en route to somewhere. Using those principles as both a physical and figurative means, this project attempts to mobilise the object of the British-South African exchange itself along the axis of the contemporary, toward the present moment.

The written component of my work appropriates the form of a stock book – an unbound, open organisational system for recording an exhibition process – offering a narrative of the British-South African case study: its cast members, selection processes, logistical and political concerns, the mixed curatorial messages sent and the exhibitions’ variegated reception. These details serve to complicate perceptions of the travelling exhibition as some universal vector of culture or as a stable historical fact.

The travelling nature of the case study is, in a sense, mirrored in the exploded paper trail it left behind, scattered throughout the British Council Offices, the Courtauld Institute, and Tate Gallery Archives in London; the Stedelijk Museum files in Amsterdam; and the press files of the South African National Gallery in Cape Town.¹⁷ The to-ing and fro-ing its investigation necessitated could not be more fitted to this project’s conceptual implications, which if unpacked, could affect curatorial practice across time zones.

But how to transport the exhibitions’ inherent cultural baggage of white nationalist and colonial tensions without veering towards nostalgia or indifference? How to responsibly invoke the spirits of a time, channelling (and challenging) their imaginative and material bearing on the present?¹⁸ How long is too long to spend rummaging through an endless freight of possibilities as to the exhibitions’ actual look and feel with so little photographic documentation? Can the lapse between seeing and remembering be rendered? What kind of passport is required? Are all cases of curatorial border-jumping successful?

Perhaps the only diplomatic course is to enter via the back door of the pink wall, the display scaffold, the staff meeting memo...the Appendix.

16. Latin *curare* ‘take care of,’ from *cura* ‘care.’ (Oxford Dictionary, 2010).

17. With limited time and means I was able to explore the records held in these locations. Documentation may still exist in the archives of other institutions involved in the British and South African exhibition tours.

18. See Jan Verwoert’s (2008) writing on future histories and the pandemonium of irreverent styles of nostalgia.

Rather than acting as an afterthought or illustrative supplement, the extended Appendix to this stock book should be read as only a provisional ‘conclusion’ to the case study – offering a number of back doors through which it might be accessed. Making a utility of the seemingly secondary macro- and micro-structures of the 1940s exhibitions, this section of the project attempts to dislodge the terms and conditions of travelling curatorship – the principles of packing – by versioning, rearranging, ‘cooking’ up (Greenblatt 1990) their material and metaphorical implications for contemporary exhibition practice.

What results overall, is an unorthodox record of diplomatic curatorial engagement wherein the exhibition becomes a visible framework within which to negotiate the ‘taste’ and ‘expertism’ governing cultural arrangements; the questionable ambassadorial status of objects; and the transformative potential of borders as a place of beginning.¹⁹

19. See Homi Bhabha’s (1994) citation of Heidegger in his discussion on the border as a location.

*

When asked about the exact tone of pink used on the walls of the *Exhibition of Contemporary South African Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture*, the Tate archivists could find no record. The paint company Plascon issues one shade though: R6-B1-4, *Endless Possibilities*.

CASE STUDY

Exhibition of Contemporary British Paintings and Drawings (South Africa, 1947-8) Exhibition of Contemporary South African Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture (Britain and elsewhere, 1948-9)

First contact

In 1935 a first discussion began amongst the Fine Arts (General) Committee of the British Council [BC] concerning an exhibition of British artworks in South Africa for the *Empire Exhibition* of 1936 (British Council 1935). It was decided that a show of British Contemporary Art would be sent under the supervision of a sub-committee (consisting of Lord Sandwich, Mr Campbell Dodgson, and Edward Marsh). The sub-committee were responsible for selecting the exhibition but also lent works from their private collections.²⁰ The minutes of that November meeting suggest that the conception of “contemporary art” was put to rest quite matter-of-factly:

The question of the definition of “Contemporary Art” was discussed and it was suggested that this might be taken to include any artist who was living from 1920 onwards. It was, however, considered undesirable to lay down a rigid principle and it was decided that the question should be left to the Sub-Committee to decide.
(British Council 7-11-35)

20. We know from the minutes that there was a ‘black-and-white’ section of reproduced images in the exhibition (BC 1936b).

21. *This task fell to Mr Dougal Malcolm – the then South African representative on the BC in Britain.*

22. *See, point 6) in the minutes from this third meeting of the Fine Arts Committee, under the title ‘South African Exhibition’.*

The Department of Overseas Trade had already voted to contribute £500 and it was decided that another £1 500 be garnered from various sources (including South Africans living abroad in Britain) to cover freight and insurance.²¹

The Empire Exhibition was regarded as a favourable ‘propaganda’ (BC 1936a) opportunity for the Council and one of potential commercial gain, where the works would also be for sale. Considering the expense and import of the project, it was decided not to leave full responsibility with the director of the Johannesburg Art Gallery for the hanging but rather to send a BC representative to accompany the pieces through the ‘loading on the ship, unloading at the port, railway transport to Johannesburg, unpacking, examining and checking the works on arrival, as well as the numerous and important arrangements in the art gallery itself.’ (BC 1936a).²²

By October 1936, Major Longden had much to report – the works had been ‘dispatched’ to South Africa (BC 1936b). We know from the Tate online archives that one of them was John Nash’s *The Cornfield* (1918) which was at the time in the collection of Edward Marsh (member of the Sub-Committee). Major Longden reported that though they’d expected an official exhibition catalogue, the Exhibition authorities failed to produce one, however Longden had instructed all press-clippings to be collected. The catalogue was not the only frustration faced by Longden: he described to the committee the difficulty in arranging the gallery on time – but noted that overall the British sections had received positive attention, having even made sales of four to five pieces (including a ‘statuette of The King’ (BC 1936b)). Two ‘competent ladies’ (BC 1936b) had been appointed to supervise sales when Longden departed back to London. The total expenditure of the show was no shock and came within the realm of £2 250 – but did not include the extra £200 for sending a representative back to South Africa to oversee the packing of the works and close of the exhibition. At this point Longden reiterated the difficulties of finding ‘a competent man for the job’ (BC 1936b) and it was decided that once again someone would be sent from England.

It was only at the 35th meeting of the Fine Arts (General) Council, following a long silence during the Second World War, that the matter of another exhibition of British work being sent to South Africa was raised – almost as an afterthought, a paragraph under item number 6 in the minutes. It was suggested that 100 works be sent as a ‘response to frequent requests’ (BC 1947b), from whom we don’t know.

John Rothenstein (son of William Rothenstein and director of the Tate Gallery from 1938 to 1964) consented to serve on the selection committee along with painters William Coldstream and Allan Gwyne-Jones. The details of their selection process are not elaborated on in the available minutes; however, many of those chosen are then later included in Rothenstein’s (1952) three-volume series on *Modern English Painters*, which suggests that this ’47-48 show was in a sense representative of a particular contemporary canon Rothenstein was building up.²³

23. See later section on Rothenstein for more details of his practice.

The 1947-8 selection and tour

When the Committee met in October 1947, the chairman reported that a South African tour had been arranged from 1 December 1947 to 21 October 1948 (BC 1947c). The towns included would be Cape Town, Bloemfontein, Port Elizabeth, East London, Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban and Pietermaritzburg. While somewhat wary of the tour becoming too extensive (loans being precious things and all), the Chair was sympathetic to requests made for the exhibition to also visit Southern Rhodesia and SouthWest Africa. The Committee needed to garner consent from the museums and private lenders of the works – the show would travel as a whole or not at all.

The “whole” show came from a number of sources (not only the British Council collection) and various schools of thought and practice regarding modern artistic work and display methods. Artists from British War artists, the New English Art Club, the Camden Town Group, the Euston Street Group and the London Group were included; and as the title of the show eventually suggests, the *Exhibition*

24. Bell was a frequent contributor to the *London* magazine, Studio, who in 1948 issued a special edition on South African art as an ancillary to the Exhibition of Contemporary South African Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture when it came to the Tate gallery.

25. Interestingly, none of the works listed in the catalogue are dated – rather their collection information and dimensions are prioritised.

26. See Illustrations for the provisional dates for the Exhibition of Contemporary British Paintings and Drawings, November 1947 to June 1948.

of *Contemporary British Paintings and Drawings*, the work comprised 75 paintings in total, with a number of watercolours (25) and drawings (30). The catalogue of the exhibition (BC 1947a) details a short biography of each artist and the collection information of each work. Out of the 40 artists on show: there were three women artists (Vanessa Bell, Gwen John, and Ethel Walker who had all either studied at the Slade School or exhibited with one of the main artistic groups around London); some were born outside of Britain – a number of South Africans working in publishing or criticism in London such as Graham Bell and H.E. de Plessis,²⁴ as well as Francis Hodgkins (New Zealand), Rodrigo Moynihan (Canary Islands), Wyndam Lewis (America), WR Sickert (Munich).

Artists such as Sickert were heralded by Rothenstein (and of course others) as being heroes of British post-impressionism. Sickert's critical stance towards the aesthetics of abstract expressionism is evident in its absence within the show, with very "true to life" subject matter which, as we hear later, 'struck exactly the right note...the Selection Committee had been well briefed as to South African taste' (BC 1948b).

The genres of work can be roughly divided into several categories such as landscape (architecture and nature – the most abstract being Ben Nicholson's *Painting*, 1938), interior (often with a female subject within the composition which then makes it oscillate between the categories of portraiture and still life – such as Sickert's *The Mantelpiece* (1907) and Gwen John's *Girl Reading* (perhaps re-titled *The Convalescent* 1918-9), and still life (of both an impressionist-inspired nature and the fauvist stylings of Graham Sutherland in his *Thorns* (1945) for instance).^{25, 26}

The exhibition's shipping was done by the company Beck & Pollitzer whose handling of such a large-scale shipment was, according to a letter, 'distinctly successful' (Beck & Pollitzer 1948).

Exhibition mediation/Mediating the exhibition

Mrs Sommerville (head of the British Council's Fine Art Section) noted in the following meeting of the Fine Arts (General) Committee that special committees were being set up in each of the South African exhibition venues and that in Cape Town, arrangements were being made to host four lectures per week over the four weeks in which the exhibition was installed in the National Gallery. 'Broadcast talks, films, posters, newspaper reviews and articles were being organised to assist in the discussion and popularising of the exhibition...' (BC 1947d).²⁷

In the next meeting (BC 1948a) we learn only that Mr Kennedy-Cooke had been to see the exhibition in South Africa and to further arrangements for the remainder of the tour (which makes one suspect that things were still not "done and dusted" as far as gallery contacts and set up were concerned). By May 1948, the next convening of the Fine Arts (General) Committee, John Rothenstein was able to report on the exhibition he had seen in Pietermaritzburg (in the minutes Bloemfontein was first inserted and then later amended). According to him,

...the exhibition was harmed in prestige by being badly shown in one or two places (he particularly mentioned Port Elizabeth) and recommended that first-class exhibitions should not be sent to places where they could not be properly shown. He also asked whether it could not be arranged that catalogues should always be lent to school parties visiting [Council] exhibitions. He found this was not being done and took it upon himself to arrange this when he visited the exhibition. It was AGREED that both these recommendations should be borne in mind for future. (BC 1948b)

27. Clive Bell, Edward Marsh, John Rothenstein and the Duke of Wellington are present in the meeting.

In the Press

In general, the reception of "foreign", "modern" art in South Africa was a matter of public debate. And indeed, a spate of articles and letters to newspaper editors pre-empt as well

as interpret the works and styles comprising the *Exhibition of Contemporary British Paintings and Drawings*.

On 15 November 1947 the *Cape Times*' 'Weekend Magazine' printed a comprehensive article written, with a certain amount of insider knowledge it would seem, by the secretary for the South African Association of Arts, Mr RK Cope. The text, entitled 'British Spirit in Art: An exhibition of contemporary British art will open at the National Gallery today' (Cope 1947a), oscillates between reportage and the style of a 'think-piece'. It states that the exhibition came at a time when 'art is news in South Africa and when there are signs everywhere of an awakening' (Cope 1947a). This awakening it says is heralded by the fact that such a prestigious showing of British work is deemed to grace the Cape's shores.

'Enlightened and adventurous' (Cope 1947a) are the words used to describe the British exhibition, not seen as overly academic but embodying a certain generational/cultural "spirit" – a fact which made the article's writer think perhaps the choice was a little outdated ('for all their competence and standing [they] are too far behind the times and not truly representative of what is original, daring and sincere in the art of our day' (Cope 1947a).²⁸

First and foremost, the British show is designated by Cope as an important exchange art exhibition, which naturally 'implies a return of the courtesy' (Cope 1947a). And he reflects on the possible effects of the exchange on art produced in South Africa in the years to come as well as what the nature of the work sent to the Tate would be.

It seems in fact that the Union Gov had already received an invitation from the Tate Gallery Trustees to formulate a South African exhibition.²⁹ And Cope's article elucidates the machinations at work in bringing about such a project of this international scale, saying that in terms of patronage, 'the more remote the intervention of the Government itself, the better for all concerned' (Cope 1947a). If the nature of art is a public one then the 'recognition' of that through education and 'active [public] sympathy' (Cope 1947a) was considered profoundly important for the development of any nation.³⁰ Compared

28. This of course raises the issues of what exactly was considered 'truly representative' and who the 'our' is that is being invoked.

29. Cape Times 1947c.

30. Particularly one on the brink of drastic political shifts such as South Africa in the elections of 1948.

with non-governmental public bodies such as the British Council, the South African Association of Arts was in its fledgling stages.

A number of other writers bemoaned the lack of exposure 'ordinary' South Africans had to 'Modern' (European) art except via reproductions (*Cape Times* 1947c). The Art Critic, writing for the Cape Argus however, allows for this lack of exposure to what he calls, the 'palmy days of cultural developments in Europe' (1947b) due to war-time travel restrictions and, in combination with an exhibition of contemporary Dutch art which visited South Africa in May 1947, saw these shows as providing 'a welcome opportunity for making up lost time' (Art Critic 1947b). The time lost, it would seem, would be in the domain of European art history: 'South African art was rooted in the West and could not live healthily if cut off from its roots' says one writer in the *Cape Argus* 1947d).

With this long lineage in mind, the works on the British show were said to reflect new methods of showing the 'eternal things' within a 'contemporary situation' in 'changed times' (Cope 1947a), not merely repeating certain conventions of workmanship or subject. The effect of the exhibition was apparently often 'arresting and unfamiliar' (Art Critic 1947a) requiring open-mindedness from viewers. 'Those who like to understand their art at first inspection' (Cape Argus 1947a) were reassured that the problem pictures were in small proportion to the more popular on show.

Lunch-hour talks

The exhibition's press-reception focuses quite intently on the lunch-hour gallery talks, which were an attempt at engendering the open-mindedness advocated by a number of critics (Art Critic 1947a). Advertised as a rare opportunity for anyone 'interested in art matters...to learn to enjoy contemporary painting' (Art Critic 1947b), the lectures would apparently both analyse and criticise the works on exhibition. Organised by the South African Association for Arts, the talks were meant to bring the exhibition 'before

31. Not a lot of information exists as to the nature, role and content of these public programmes which began in earnest in the 1930s. Sandra Boerngen, a transdisciplinary sociologist, who is currently researching the field of modern art and its mediation in South Africa during that period, was kind enough to share some of her findings with me.

32. See Illustrations section for a list of topics and speakers.

a public with full understanding of modern artistic trends' (*Cape Times* 1947b).

At the time, lunch-hour lecture series were becoming a feature of many exhibitions in public institutions around the Union.³¹ Often the events were arranged by partners or societies invested in but not from the institution, such as the South African Association of Arts. Little has been written concerning the role of these talks on a national scale, however the newspaper articles which surround the British exhibition provide a set of key insights into the tone as well as the style of these early forms of 'public programming' around contemporary art.

An article entitled, 'Lecture to Educate Public on Modern Art,' in the *Cape Times* (1947b), details the actual programme of these lunch-time sessions during the British Exhibition at the National Gallery in Cape Town.³²

Part of the programme, though it is never officially listed in the press, was a last talk by Jean Welz (director of the Hugo Naude Art Centre, Worcester, SA at the time) is reported on in a small separate piece appearing in the *Argus* bearing the title 'The Artist Must be Modern' (*Cape Argus* 1947e). During this lunchtime slot, Welz made a point of art's role in facilitating communication between one man and another, saying that when that communication failed to happen – when art was not recognised as an important (inter)societal medium/mediator – the breakdown 'led to wars and other miseries' (*Cape Argus* 1947e). Though this was a 'difficult' prospect, Welz is paraphrased as saying, an artist's work should therefore be a free expression 'of to-day' – adding that 'any influences that repressed an artist's urge to express himself freely and kept him bound to old ideas were bad' (*Cape Argus* 1947e).

This rousing finale by Welz presents a persistent line within the dynamic public debate generated by the British exhibition, concerning not only the place of modern art in South African society, but Art and the Artist at that moment.

The other lunch-time lectures took a more concrete approach in terms of subject, identifying new styles of representation, and ways in which the public could 'read'

those styles rather than baffling over their elusiveness, etc. The inherent tension within the series seems to focus on bridging the potentially alienating ‘international’ content of some of the works themselves with the benefits of an exchange exhibition between ‘contemporaneous’ Britain and her speedily becoming-former dominion, the Union of South Africa.³³

33. For a wider historical context, refer to Saul Dubow (2006).

The article, ‘Attitude to Modern Art Criticised – Those People who “Know What They Like”’ (*Cape Times* 1947d) takes up the question of South Africa’s relationship with the idea of the ‘modern’ in art more broadly. It states that in a lunchtime lecture given by Mrs Rhoda Pepys, the South African paintress delineated the space between individual preference: a like or dislike of a work of art, and its actual art historical value. According to the reporter, Pepys claimed in no uncertain terms that any general misgivings about the quality of work on display often issued from ‘people who were pleased with their own ignorance’ (*Cape Times* 1947d).

Referring to particular pieces in the exhibition, such as John Nash’s surrealist *Two Serpents* and *The Monster Field* (which was actually on loan from the Durban Art Gallery collection for the exhibition’s tour around South Africa), Pepys upheld the tension between a painting’s subjective “beauty” and its obviously masterful execution. ‘We may not like it,’ she is quoted as saying, but the work’s ‘impact on our vision...is difficult to forget’ (*Cape Times* 1947d). In the same vein as Cope and Welz, Pepys commended the artist capable of capturing the spirit of the contemporary in a way that went beyond the confines of the studio to engage with the world at large.

Returning the Courtesy – plans for the Exhibition of Contemporary South African Painting, Drawing and Sculpture, 1948

The article ‘Too Little Modern Art in S.A. Galleries’ reporting on the opening of the British Council’s show at the National Gallery states that the South African Association of Arts was ‘well-ahead with plans to send a reciprocal

34. In an article in the *Cape Times* (1948a), 'Plans for Collection of SA Art Approved – Works to be Exhibited in Tate Gallery', the Association details their invitations received from various governments.

35. See letter from SAAA (1947) to Lord Harlech (Tate Board of Trustees).

36. Rothenstein's comments follow a heated debate in Britain regarding the incorporation of temporary shows of what was called "modern foreign" art into public gallery programmes. That conception of "foreign" was not linked in this instance to the British Empire but rather to her European neighbours. The discussion of foreignness was brought to bear by the addition of a wing dedicated to the Modern Foreign at the Tate Gallery in the late 1920s. This wing could be found in one of the last sections of the gallery itself, ensconced within the otherwise British art historical narrative told via permanent exhibitions of works by Turner and Sargent. Brandon Taylor in his *Art for the Nation* (1999) highlights the perceived decline in value and quality of academic art coming out of the Royal Academy, and the subsequent reprioritisation of national artistic canons, using the vehicle of the exhibition as a means of bringing in (much-needed) stimulus from "outside" to the "inside". This 'knitting together of realpolitik with the cultural sphere' (Taylor 1999:153) within the pre- and post-WWII era signals the beginnings of a gradual shift in the role of exhibitions as diplomatic tools, within a framework of "new internationalism".

representative exhibition of South African art to Britain next year' (*Cape Times* 1947c). The idea of a travelling exhibition in and from the Union had in fact been announced earlier in January of 1947 by Charles te Water, chairman of the South African Association of Arts, at the opening of a show by Pierneef at the Maskew Miller Art Gallery in Cape Town.

An article in the *Cape Times* reports that a 'national exhibition' (1947a) had been suggested by the South Africa House, London, whereby the Union High Commissioner in London, Mr Heaton Nicholls, had approached the SAAA. The South African Railway Administration is mentioned as a key player in the selection of 'representative works' (*Cape Times* 1947a), which as part of an official committee would be accepting submissions by artists from all provinces of the Union.

The exhibition, te Water is quoted as saying, would definitely tour South Africa and then 'in all probability be sent to London', thus enabling art from the country to 'rightfully take its place alongside the art of other countries.' (*Cape Times* 1947a). Later that same year, the *Argus* states that a nationally representative exhibition of contemporary South African art would be housed in one of Britain's 'leading galleries' (*Cape Argus* 1947c), before acquiescing to similar invitations from Canada, the USA, Belgium, Holland and France.³⁴

The budget for the show was initially pegged at £5 800 for an exhibition of 24-25 artists, for the entire tour.³⁵ With no local equivalent of the British Council's (non-governmental sponsored) financial capacity, the bill was to be footed by the Union's Ministry of Finance. Despite this ambitious all-inclusiveness, the exhibition was intended to be modest in size (the Union Government had laid down £7 300 for the project). A letter from Rothenstein to the Tate Gallery Board of Trustees highlights the importance of a modest selection of works not only monetarily but in terms of the gallery space available at the Tate. With six galleries operational in the immediate post-War period, Rothenstein hoped that only the 'most representative works by the most outstanding artists' (Rothenstein 1947) make the cut.³⁶

Contrary to the Tate Trustees' moderate ambitions for the South African exhibition, the general local consensus seems to have been that the show needed to be 'comprehensive', including sculptors and painters 'of all schools' (*Cape Times* 1948a).³⁷ The South African Association of Arts is quoted by the *Cape Times* as stating that this 'exhibition was the most important undertaking of its kind ever made by South Africa' (1948a). The exhibition's symbolic scale would most likely mean that a larger number of works would be selected in order to mirror that importance. At this point, it was also imagined that the exhibition would tour the Union upon its return from overseas for the South African public to be exposed to the works themselves, despite the fact that the priority seems to have been placed on what 'criticism or praise' the exhibition received from international audiences (*Cape Times* 1948a).

With the *Exhibition of Contemporary British Paintings and Drawings* well on its way around the Union, the 'Plans for Collection of SA Art Approved – Works to be Exhibited in Tate Gallery' were then announced in the *Cape Times* (1948a). The works for the 'reciprocal representative exhibition of South African art to Britain' would be selected by a South African committee, under the South African Association for Arts (*Cape Times* 1948a). The SAAA would apparently act as an 'agent of the government' (*Cape Times* 1948a), taking responsibility for organisation and collection of the artworks being selected and sent.

Despite the open call mentioned by te Water in the early months of 1947, the actual selection process is reported to have began with an 'appeal' (*Cape Times* 1948a) to "only" 70-75 artists around the Union to submit six or so paintings and sculptures which would be dealt with at the end of May, 1948 by the committee in Cape Town (enough time for the works to reach London by late autumn when the exhibition was scheduled). The selection committee was drawn from a countrywide mix of artists and 'non-technical experts' (*Cape Times* 1948a).³⁸ In fact, the task team was made up of representatives from the South African Association of Arts, the Department of

37. This kind of statement concerning the possibility of multiple existing 'schools' or canons of practice within South African artistic production should be read alongside Geoffrey Long's introductory essay to the exhibition catalogue of the Exhibition of Contemporary South African Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture (1948) which then states that there are no "schools" of South African art to be spoken of yet (Long 1948:7).

38. See Illustrations section for a list of members on the selection committee as reported by the *Cape Times* 1948a.

39. Interestingly, the establishment of the group was announced the same weekend that Gerard Sekoto left for Paris having financed the trip himself. In an article in the *Cape Argus*, entitled 'To Study Art in Paris, African Painter Leaves' (1947b), Sekoto is quoted as saying that 'he did not intend holding any exhibitions overseas as he was not taking any of his work with him, but he would learn all he could.'

40. This phrase is taken from an article published in the *Cape Argus* entitled 'On the Running of an Art Gallery' (Henniker-Heaton 1948) which detailed the 'strange mix of attributions' possessed by any successful art gallery director.

41. More on this in the final section on the reception of the South African exhibition selection.

External Affairs, the Union Education Department, and the State Information Office.³⁹

Apparently, the committee received about 700 works in response to their appeal (Art Critic 1948b). Amongst other 'technical hitches' mentioned by the *Cape Argus* correspondent (1948a) within the process of comprising the so-called representative group of artists, this inundation resulted in the Tate director, John Rothenstein, being called on by the Union government to become the selection committee's main advisor.

***John Rothenstein: 'A Many-Sided Fellow'*⁴⁰**

This visit by Rothenstein and more specifically, his involvement, as an Englishman, in curating an exhibition intended to represent South Africa was met with a mixed response. The praise with which the *Exhibition of Contemporary British Paintings and Drawings* – an initiative overseen chiefly by Rothenstein – was, as one could gather from the press, generally positive. However, when it came to an external, foreign, even British curator, being recruited by the State to solve a local artistic stalemate caused by the overwhelming response to the SAAA's exhibition open call, the stakes were somewhat different.⁴¹

In the run-up to Rothenstein's return, a number of press articles seek to contextualise the authority of the so-called 'art expert' (*Cape Times* 1948d). One text comprising two sections entitled, 'John Rothenstein' and 'All Due to Sugar' goes into some detail concerning the origins of the Tate's standing based on its fortune made from sugar plantations (*Cape Times* 1948d). From early on, Sir Henry Tate gave money to philanthropic activities, but his interest in art only came in later years, when he began to build a personal collection for which he constructed a large private gallery in his home in Streatham. He soon accumulated so many works that he decided to leave his collection 'to the nation' (*Cape Times* 1948d), and after the government granted a site for a building – Tate invested £80 000 towards a public gallery.

Rothenstein's own standing is validated in the

local South African press by his family's history of art involvement. One profile in the *Cape Argus* begins with the line: 'Men with famous fathers seldom make a name for themselves' (1948a). And Rothenstein did have quite a legacy to live up to. As mentioned, his father was William Rothenstein: an established painter out of the academy who actually directed the Royal College of Art in London. But John sought to carve out his own niche, travelling to the United States, Kentucky in fact, where he became an art history professor at the university. After marrying a woman from Pittsburgh, Rothenstein returned to Britain where he became the youngest ever to be appointed a director of art, stationed at the Leeds City Art Gallery (*Cape Argus* 1948a).

Here the young Rothenstein is reputed to have put a few noses out of joint concerning the art gallery's collection. In 12 months, he redesigned the layout of the place, introduced a series of 'harmonious background' walls on which only the more interesting elements of the collection were hung (*Cape Argus* 1948a). Apparently 'banal works were banned' (*Cape Argus* 1948a) and anyone asking questions about missing works were to be told by gallery staff that they had been "empowered by the director to offer it to him as a personal gift" (Rothenstein directly quoted in the *Cape Argus* 1948a). Throughout subsequent years and positions, Rothenstein continued to ruffle feathers, building collections of contemporary paintings and making exhibitions juxtaposing old and new works.

Following his appointment as director of the Tate Gallery in 1938, and the bombing which damaged the building during the Second World War, Rothenstein sought to renovate not only the concrete structure of the place but also its organisational infrastructure. With the support of the Board of Trustees, he purchased a number of newer, what might be called edgier pieces for the collection, now tended like a 'show garden cultivated and tended by skilful hands' (*Cape Argus* 1948a). And as usual, during his directorship, Rothenstein was also responsible for redecorating the galleries with suffused lighting and other

curatorial tricks.

Despite his somewhat radical strategies, Rothenstein is described as well versed in ‘the art of diplomacy’ (*Cape Argus* 1948a), not clearly aligning himself with any particular artistic canon or school. His interest in developing a discourse around the practice of his contemporaries, however, is evident, as reflected in his three-volume “history” of contemporary painting in Britain, *Modern English Painters*, first issued some years after the South African exhibition in 1952. Many of the artists included in the overview, such as Sickert as well as Augustus and Gwen John, featured in the British exhibition in South Africa. A section of his introduction to the series sums up Rothenstein’s seemingly radical vision of what art was and could be at that moment in history (forgive the lengthy quote):

Art of our time is in fact, the product of catastrophic change. This is a change-loving age and its artists are uncanonizable, they are deeply respectfully discontent with the incompleteness of an older generation’s enchanted vision of the world.

I cannot therefore envisage the twentieth century either as a period of retrogression or of progress, still less of stability. I am mainly conscious of a complex interplay of innumerable personalities; of the action upon these personalities of numerous and various forces – economic necessity, fashion, the momentum of traditional aesthetic movements, social change, patronage, psychological and archaeological discovery and so forth – forces which often neutralise each other and are, for the time being, incalculable in their effects. With the passage of time much of what presents itself to our eyes as confused will insensibly assume a settled pattern; then there will be written a history of this period which is accurate in its perspective and secure in its critical judgments. But I am not at all certain for the historian of that distant time, who looks back with justified condescension upon ours, may not

perhaps envy a little the historian however ludicrous his errors, to whom the artists who are the common objects of his study were familiar figures...

The increasing idiosyncrasy of their work mimics the discrepancy, in the political sphere, between the proclamations, which grew thunderous upon the conclusion of both World Wars, of international solidarity and the persistent growth of aggressive nationalism.

The river of art history has overflowed its banks. (Rothenstein 1952:13-30)

Rothenstein in South Africa – the selection process

The purpose of the ‘Tate Director’s Visit’ (*Cape Argus* correspondent 1948a) is framed from the beginning as a purely advisory one, to assist in the ‘weeding out’ process of South African works bound for the Tate (Cope 1947b). In a letter between Mr Cope and Sir Jasper Ridley (the Chairman of the Tate Gallery Board of Trustees) it is stated that Rothenstein would not actually be considered a member of the selection committee in order that he maintain a more ‘creative scope’ (Cope 1947b). On 11 April 1948 John Rothenstein arrived (*Cape Times* 1948b), to take a brief tour around the Union, making it in time to Cape Town for the final selection committee meetings held at the South African National Gallery (*Cape Times* 1948a).

According to a letter to the *Cape Argus* editor entitled ‘Pictures for Exhibition Overseas’ (Lewis 1948a) the National Gallery was apparently entirely closed to the public during the time of the selection committee meetings. Frequent calls from the public were heard for the selection process to be made more transparent – the suggestion was even made for the SAAA to ‘gratify the public by holding an exhibition [at the National Gallery]’ of rejected works (Lewis 1948a).

That said, the selection committee’s internal situation was still so disoriented that upon arrival in the country, Rothenstein’s first priority was not to placate local frustration but rather to place the exhibition in an

international perspective.

Mr. Rothenstein had had a detailed discussion with General Smuts on the nature of the Exhibition which he envisaged and had received the assurance from the Prime Minister that he hoped the Selection Board would remember South Africa's reputation as an art producing nation would be at stake and he trusted they would be quite ruthless in their choice. (SAAA 1948b)

According to the minutes taken at the first meeting of the 'Selection Board for the South African Exhibition of Art overseas' (SAAA 1948b) however, Rothenstein was surprisingly shocked by the repeated use of the word 'national' in relation to the suggested exhibition of South African work. He reiterated the request of the Tate Gallery Board of Trustees made to the Association and the Union Gov for a 'small and selective exhibition composed of the best works by the best South African artists' (SAAA 1948b) – conveniently neglecting to mention all the talk of representativeness in relation to the show's character. Having made another gallery available in the Tate, which we can assume was the new Modern Foreign Wing,⁴² the notion of artistic rather than national quality was paramount. The "art expert" also encouraged the selection committee to promote 'South African subjects' (SAAA 1948b) – while avoiding any romantic characterisation of the country as well as work mimicking a European aesthetic.

The discussion also turned to other selection criteria such as whether the exhibition should include works by South African artists, such as du Plessis and Woolfe, who had been living and working in Europe. Many of the selection committee voiced concerns over this and some proposed that in cases of disagreement between Board members, Rothenstein should have the final say. Rothenstein was dubious about this, recognising the greater knowledge of South African art within the room and of particular artistic careers. The decision was therefore taken to follow Miss Prowse's tactic of 'elimination' (SAAA 1948b), while works that went unselected in the preliminary round would

42. This was completed in the late 1920s, see more details in footnote 36.

remain in case needed for later inspection. The minutes show that during this meeting,

The work of 131 artists was then examined and preliminary selections made. (SAAA 1948b)⁴³

The possibility of the exhibition travelling to other art centres within England after its stay at the Tate and before moving to other countries was also presented. Following on from this, Malherbe made the suggestion that a delegate accompany the exhibition as it travelled – the only response to which comes later.

The question of insuring the works does not seem to have been so urgent however, and it was stated that the Union Government apparently ‘never insures’ (SAAA 1948b). Committee member, Mr Theron however, did agree to put the query to his department – the Department of Education.

In the Selection Board’s final meeting on 30 April 1948, Rothenstein suggested a similar strategy to one he used at Leeds, whereby the exhibition of South African work could include an historical section. The section could comprise twenty to thirty 19th century South African paintings by artists such as Baines, Bowler and I’Ons to provide ‘an historical introduction’ (SAAA 1948c). The selection of this section was left to the Northern Sub-Committee, who would be responsible for loaning works from the Johannesburg Africana Museum, and Miss Prowse who would source work from Cape Town collections.

Mounting tensions – conversations in the train about contemporary art, quality and the problems of being-represented

In ‘A Talk About Art in the Train’ the *Argus* Art Critic claims to have overheard a conversation between two passengers wherein an ‘indignant citizen’ airs his frustration over the selection process of the South African exhibition as well as the rumour circulating that the works bound for overseas would not be shown in South Africa before being shipped (Art Critic 1948b). ‘Surely we have the right to see what is being foisted on us before they go... we want to see whether art in South Africa is being properly represented or not’.

43. The last note of the meeting on the 26th of April, 1948, includes a list of 93 paintings and drawings, with 10 sculptures that were put forward for final selection. See Illustrations for the list of preliminary selections made.

(*Cape Argus* 13-5-48). To which his companion asks, 'Are you qualified to judge?' (*Argus* 13-5-48).

In the ensuing conversation between the two train travellers the nature and function of an exhibition like this, as well as the selection process around it is compared with that of a trade or 'Union-made mining equipment' fair (*Cape Argus* 13-5-48). The second speaker raises the important point that for those 'serious' platforms, it is a professional opinion which would be sought concerning the objects displayed and not merely members of a 'general public' (*Cape Argus* 13-5-48). However, in this case, things are apparently not so serious, as 'in art one man's opinion is as good as another's!' (*Art Critic* 1948b)). The two decide however that it would be only appropriate that the works refused by the 'so-called experts' (numbering apparently 600 by this time) be shown in South Africa – though they cannot imagine a gallery able to house so many pieces (*Art Critic* 1948b).

And indeed, in a growing atmosphere of rumour and controversy around the make-up and framing of the "representative" South African exhibition, before Rothenstein's departure, the locally proclaimed "expert" made a number of public addresses in an attempt to convince South African audiences of the importance of contemporary art to society, commerce and of course diplomatic endeavours, along with the necessary infrastructure needed to support it.

At a general meeting of the South African Association of Arts at Cathedral Hall in Cape Town on 29 April 1948 he elaborated the importance of an artist's engagement with the 'outside world' (*Cape Times* 1948e). In previous years, the prominence of photography and science had apparently compelled artists to remove themselves from society, positioning themselves no longer as 'literal recorder[s] of nature' (*Cape Times* 1948e) but as more abstract commentators. With the development of surrealism however, Rothenstein promoted a 'new realism' in the work of contemporary art, saying that this was being received (bought into) with great interest in other major cultural centres. The dearth of art galleries in a capital

such as Pretoria, Rothenstein stated, coupled with the sad state of others in Natal etc., meant that the possibility of future engagement with the new international cultural sphere was unlikely unless the circumstances were improved (*Cape Times* 1948e).

These circumstances were of course, chiefly economic as well as bureaucratic, and this is what Rothenstein addressed in his lecture the same day at the Junior Chamber of Commerce. Here, the Tate director highlighted art's flourishing in a capitalist environment where the patronage of art fell to 'the State and business' (*Cape Argus* 1948c). Appealing to the businesspeople within the audience, Rothenstein outlined the importance of investing in art and local institutions – whereby 'everything was gained and nothing lost by making life more beautiful' (*Cape Argus* 1948c).

In the subsequent months, as the exhibition plans proceeded, the press debate rose to a frenzy concerning the relationship between aesthetics, accurate representation of South African "culture" abroad and the role of the arbiters (the SAAA). Queries were flying (particularly from within the SAAA and amongst other art circles) concerning what was and was not considered 'good art' (Lover of Art 1948) by the selection committee for the South African exhibition (accused of iron curtaining regarding the basis for their acceptance and rejection of work).

In a public letter from the secretary of the SAAA, Mr Cope, he acknowledges the rumour that the exhibition would be shown in South Africa only after its return from overseas, saying that it was no 'slight' on the South African public but rather a logistical necessity given the time remaining before the show's dates in London (Cope 1948). An 'Exhibition of the Rejected', as had been previously suggested by many (not only the characters of the Art Critic's dialogue) would, according to Cope, require a further culling as the number of refused works was too great – resulting in a 'Doubly Rejected' (Art Critic 1948b) contingent, which would still elicit complaint (a *Salon de Refusés-Refuses?*).

It is the sharp-witted Argus Art Critic who, once

again, manages to articulate some clear concerns as well as biases on the side of “the public” not only regarding the selection process of a representative body of contemporary “national” art, but also the motivations behind such an endeavour. In the same month as the selection committee’s meetings at the National Gallery, the Art Critic published a piece asking, very succinctly, ‘In the first place – why have an exhibition at all?’ (Art Critic 1948a)

The article lists various international and diplomatic agendas at work: South Africa’s emergence as an entity on the international political scene being one of them (‘now that Europe assumes more and more the role of a potential battleground at the expense of her traditional role of a centre of culture’ (Art Critic 1948a). Additionally, from that cultural perspective, the Art Critic advocates the sending of a South African exhibition to such prestigious locations to rectify Northern hemisphere prejudice of South Africa as ‘a cultural No Man’s Land’. By reciprocating the recent ‘projected exhibitions’ of contemporary art sent from England and other countries such as Holland, South Africa could prove that it had a ‘personal contribution to make the culture of the world’ (Art Critic 1948a).

The Art Critic admonishes the selection committee to practice caution in their choice of works to carry this global mandate. In his final section, ‘Not for Export’, the writer reminds them (and his readers) that ‘there is a place for everything’ (Art Critic 1948a) and that in some cases the works and artists cherished at home would not fare well when set in removed contexts of high artistic standard, such as the Tate and Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam. To avoid becoming the ‘laughing stock in the more sophisticated European air’, the Art Critic reminds us that,

Bedroom slippers are comfortable to wear, but they are out of place at a royal reception (1948a).

Interestingly, at the same moment as works were being selected for the South African exhibition of contemporary work, a number of artists were being chosen to represent the Union at the art show section of the Olympic Games. Works containing sports subjects by G.W. Pilkington and Walter Battiss were elected, yet again by the SAAA (Cape

Argus 1948b).

It is perhaps obvious to see that, by this point, the tensions underlying representations of South African cultural identity on international as well as local terrain, ran deeper than aesthetic questions of 'good' or 'bad' art. In fact, the South African exhibition's occurrence, lodged between the Royal visit of 1947 and the collapse of the Union Government under Smuts following the slim victory of DF Malan and the Reunited National Party (which introduced apartheid), meant that perceptions of South Africa as a place, as a precariously united (white) cultural entity and as an idea, were changing rapidly in both domestic and foreign eyes.

South Africa's short history of 'received' culture from the European mothership had engendered what had been called a 'self-culture' (Art Critic 1948c) which, at least at the frontier, was thought to allow for a kind of openness to the 'new'. 'True culture', after all, was

no more than a knowledge and appreciation of art and life. Not only a knowledge of the past and an appreciation of the present but also an awareness of the future. (Art Critic 1948c)

Those notions of art, life, and time as cultural constituents in the modern moment of the 1940s were still not entirely vernacular. Rather, South African self-culture continued to suffer from a 'smug parochialism', due to its location as a 'far-flung' (Art Critic 1948c) entity of the metropolis, both geographically and historically. According to The Art Critic, the false sense of patriotism engendered by this inferiority complex had blinded South Africans to the 'absurdity' of their prejudice against what he calls 'the adventure of contemporary art and thought' (1948c).

So long as the 'relics of the Provincial Age' (Art Critic 1948c) endured,⁴³ the proverbial (as well as the real colonial and nationalist) settlers of South Africa's cultural landscape would continue to make short-sighted judgements, about art and other aspects of social life in the country, based on dissatisfaction with the past. The truth of the country's culturally (and politically) fragile state would be openly admitted, says The Art Critic, by a 'truer

43. This phrase by The Art Critic could be read as a liberal's jab at the conservative policies of the Reunited National Party.

patriotism' (1948c).

The exhibition itself

An extract from the Memorandum from the Department of External Affairs in Pretoria concerning the 'Exhibition Abroad, of South African Contemporary Art' (1948) states that, finally, a selection of 145 pictures and sculptures had been made. None of the works were to be on sale, affirming once more that the 'object of the exhibition [was] the promotion of cultural relationships' (Department of External Affairs 1948:1).

As the 'first representative exhibition of South African painting ever to be shown in [Britain]' states Sir Jasper Ridley, chairman of the Tate Gallery Board of Trustees in his foreword to the exhibition's catalogue, a small selection of historical work (suggested originally by Rothenstein) was included by way of 'an interesting prelude' to the rest of the exhibition (Ridley 1948:5). This historical section comprised 19 works: nine oils, eight watercolours and two watercolour drawings, by a range of colonial explorers and documenters, mariner painters and early war artists from Holland. Each contained,

early scenes of Table Bay and Cape Town, historical episodes, character studies, hunting, war, farm and other topics of early Africana interest.

(Department of External Affairs 1948:1)⁴⁴

According to member of the South African selection committee and arts writer based in London, Geoffrey Long in his introduction to the exhibition catalogue, the historical section had a 'romantic "African" appeal' presenting the wildness, mystery and adventure of the South Africa of yester year; as well as the time when 'guns and wagons gave way to spades and engines' (Long 1948:7). A number of the works reflected on the Cape's history particularly, as according to Long, 'Cape Town was the only city with a past' to speak of (Long 1948:8).⁴⁵

In the contemporary section 52 artists presented 85 oils; 28 watercolour, pen and wash, gouache and tempura; seven drawings in pen, pencil and charcoal; 25 pieces of

44. See Illustrations section for the provisional dates of the Exhibition of Contemporary South African Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture.

45. See Illustrations section for the list of works in the historical section of the exhibition.

sculpture – of which 11 were wood carvings, eight bronzes, and six in stone and marble. The works spanned a period of 40 years prior to the exhibition's opening date.

Some artists had up to six works each on display – these included Enslin de Plessis, JH Pierneef, Moses Kottler, Jean Welz; those with five works each were Pieter Wenning, Alexis Preller, Francois Krige, Cecil Higgs, Irma Stern; four each were John Dronsfield, Lippy Lipschitz, Cecil Michaelis, Maud Sumner, Merlyn Evans 'and the native artist Gerard Sekoto' (Department of External Affairs 1948:1). The remaining artists had about two to three works on the exhibition. And included in the show were 12 women artists/sculptors.⁴⁶

As in the case of the British exhibition, the South African catalogue (produced by the South African Association of Arts, printed in Cape Town) contains only a short biography of each participating artist and a list of their works' titles, media, dimensions and loaner. It was to be printed in English, Afrikaans (which was considered sufficient for the exhibition's presentation in Holland) and French (for its tour to Belgium, France and Canada) (Department of External Affairs 1948:2).

In addition to the hoped-for context provided by the historical prelude to the main exhibition, Geoffrey Long's (1948) catalogue text manages to situate and legitimate the history of South African contemporary art in terms of its connections with European traditions but also its responsiveness to local concerns. In contrast to perceptions of the exhibition's 'national character' (Ridley 1948:5), Long warns that visitors who came in search of a clear 'national flavour' (1948:7) would be disappointed.

Long sketches a dismal version of South Africa's artistic landscape – with few commercial galleries, no organising exhibition body like the New English Art Club, and 'certain art dealers [who] travelled the country by caravan selling junk pictures to naïve and believing farmers' (Long 1948:9). A few artists managed to acquire an academic education (at the Slade, like Neville Lewis or Maggie Laubser in Germany), however, the infrastructure at home remained fragile. He then describes the relief

46. See Illustrations section for the complete list of works in the main exhibition.

brought by the formation of the New Group, by artists such as Boonzaier, Lock and McCaw, forging a necessary contemporary link with experimental art scenes outside the country.

The establishment of the Johannesburg Municipal Art Gallery is cited by Long as a turning point in the trajectories of young art students and the general art education of the public. Finally, South Africans could 'see great painting in the flesh' (Long 1948:10) rather than mere reproductions – bringing the traditions of Impressionism and Post-Impressionism into the parochial frame as it were.

Later of course, the Second World War and the return of many South Africans from abroad (such as Maud Sumner who'd been living in Paris) as well as the generation of works by artists in the South African Forces, like Alexis Preller (who was in fact a prisoner of war), had served to open up South African artistic borders to international influence.

Of the 'contemporary trends' (Long 1948:11) now emerging in the "bushman painting" – inspired work by Battis, Long reserves his judgement, saying that it remained to be seen whether this interest, and the controversy it raised, were a 'passing phase' (Long 1948:11).

In terms of the sculptural progress being made, Kottler's 'characteristically "African"' style had restored dignity to the "Bantu" in a way that countered the 'worst sentimentality' with which they had been depicted in the past (Long 1948:11). And speaking of Bantu, the work of Gerard Sekoto is saved for last by Long. As someone problematically 'divorced by race and environment from the European artists of the country' he stood as one of the few artists working on a 'social theme' (Long 1948:11-12).

Alluding to the socio-political scene at home however, Long's introduction ends on an ominous note, saying that despite the South African Association of Art's vital new role in coordinating art activities within the Union,

The country has problems, provocative questions which may not stimulate a more clear direction in the Arts. (Long 1948:12)

The exhibition's transport would be handled by the same company responsible for the British show, Beck & Pollitzer, however the unpacking and packing of artworks at each point of the exhibition could be entrusted to 'suitable... agents' (Department of External Affairs 1948:4) offered by the gallery.

As per Malherbe's earlier suggestion, it was decided that the exhibition would be accompanied for its entire tour through Britain, Europe and North America by a representative from South Africa (preferably 'an art authority' (*Cape Argus* 1948d), i.e. from the selection committee itself). At a certain moment it seems that Le Roux Smith Le Roux would be the one to accompany the works to London and on its tour through Europe.⁴⁷

Le Roux's close relationship with Rothenstein is hinted at by their correspondence throughout the selection process for the South African exhibition, and then confirmed when Le Roux later joins the Tate Gallery.⁴⁸ It seems however, that due to some trouble with the Transvaal provincial authorities, which Le Roux mentions in the correspondence between himself and Rothenstein,⁴⁹ he would not be able to fulfil his role as the exhibition's chaperone (Le Roux 1948).

Following some further delays, it is reported in the *Argus* (1948d) that finally, Dr M Bokhorst, a member of the South African selection committee and professor of the history of Dutch culture at the University of Pretoria, would accompany the exhibition for its installment in the Netherlands.

47. *Le Roux's own work was on the show and at the time, he was also director of what Geoffrey Long called, 'the most ambitious art project in the country' (1948:11): the Pretoria Art Centre).*

48. *A letter from a public relations officer in New York is addressed to Le Roux at the Tate Gallery in May, 1950 with questions concerning the South African exhibition. While working as the Tate Assistant Keeper, it seems that le Roux was responsible for leaking certain information concerning Rothenstein's mismanagement of gallery funds to the press. The scandal almost saw Rothenstein dismissed and became known as the 'Tate Affair'.*

49. *This is confirmed in a newspaper article following the opening of the exhibition at the Tate which hints at the possible loss to the exhibition's publicity because of the lack of its accompaniment by Le Roux. See Cape Times 1948f.*

Receptions

I hope this display of what our young country has been able to produce in the field of art will not be without interest for the old world. Cultural relations between Great Britain and South Africa have always been close and I trust that the exhibition will contribute to an even better understanding both of the Union and what it stands for; but it should also be regarded as an expression of goodwill on our part. Goodwill between nations, as between individuals, is only possible when they know each other, and especially when they understand and appreciate each other's cultural and social aspirations and achievements. It is my fervent hope, and that of my colleagues, that this exhibition will be received in the sphere of art, but much more so that it will prove to be a silent ambassador for goodwill and better understanding. (DF Malan read by Mr Egeland 1948)

50. Taken from list of 'Acceptances to a Private View and Reception given by the High Commissioner for the Union of South Africa and Mrs Lief Egeland on the occasion of the opening of the South African Art Exhibition at the Tate Gallery on Monday, 20th September, 1948,'. Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam Archives, file: 3314. The list of 'company' present also appeared in South African newspapers.

51. See Illustrations section for reported transcript.

Apparently the Private View and Reception of The Exhibition of Contemporary South African Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture at the Tate Gallery on 20 September 1948 saw 800 guests arrive, with members of the VIP group including a number of South African expats in London; those like Lady Michaelis who'd taken the trip especially; dozens of emissaries of foreign missions; members of the British Cabinet; a few of the artists themselves (such as Mr and Mrs Lippy Lipschitz); as well as one Mr J. Pollock (?).⁵⁰

The message from recently elected South African Prime Minister, DF Malan, was read by Mr Egeland.⁵¹ In addition to the above, the leader of South Africa's Reunited National Party stated that he hoped the hosting nations of 'the first comprehensive selection of our art to be shown outside South Africa' would recognise the country's developing sense of 'self-expression' in addition to its

‘transplanted European’ artistic tradition (Malan 1948). Again the mantra was heard of the exhibition’s cultural value, in keeping with the ‘spirit of Unesco’ being offered ‘among the nations at a time when a general appreciation of such values was never more needed’ (Malan 1948) – contradictory though this would seem in light of subsequent foreign policy implemented by Malan’s party.

Apparently Rothenstein himself was ‘very satisfied’ with the choice of works and believed the exhibition to be the crystallisation of ‘everything that is best in South African art’ (Cape Times correspondent 1948a). And even the chairman of the Tate Gallery Board of Trustees, Sir Jasper Ridley, in a letter to Rothenstein, admitted that the exhibition was ‘better than I had expected, and does you personally great credit for having engineered it in that manner’ (1948). As an aside, Ridley mentions the sculptors as the most interesting, followed by a disparaging remark however about their foreign-sounding names: ‘if only they weren’t called Moses Kottler and Lippy Lipschitz!’ (1948).

Ridley’s perception of the show’s national character was in fact its most obvious lack according to the critics. Despite being taken aback by the prominence given to ‘wood and stone carvings which in most art exhibitions in [Britain] are not usually in the limelight’ (Cape Times correspondent 1948a), one of the harshest comments launched by the British press and South African correspondents abroad seems to have been that the exhibition failed to present a coherent sense of a “school” of South African art (*Daily Telegraph*, paraphrased by a writer for the *Cape Times* (correspondent 1948b)).⁵³

A cutting remark by Eric Newton of the London *Sunday Times* bemoans the adolescent immaturity of most of the works, saying that the only notable examples (such as the 19th century pieces) could “‘never have evolved in South Africa”” (quoted by *Cape Times* correspondent 1948c). One criticism issued later the next year condemns John Rothenstein for having gone to such an effort resulting in such a ‘strange collection of half- and three-quarter-bred curiosities’ (Cape Times correspondent 1949).

53. Interestingly very little record of the show’s reception exists in the Tate Archives. It seems that the South African press remained true to their word, seeking to amplify the foreign reception of the South African exhibition by quoting or paraphrasing it for readers at home in local papers.

Another writer for *Punch* is reported to have said however that despite the non-revelatory nature of the exhibition as a whole, a number of works displayed such craftsmanship that they should surely ‘enrich some of our permanent collections.’ (quoted by *Cape Argus* correspondent 1948c). And indeed, apparently some agreed as can be seen by the high turn out of visitors to the exhibition (apparently 30 000 people entered the gallery in the first fortnight of the show’s run) and the selling of 2000 catalogues (*Cape Argus* correspondent 1948).

In lieu of actual photographic documentation, the writerly descriptions of the exhibition’s display are useful. Even the title cards get a mention – as neatly attached to the walls, detailing the artist’s name and the work (*Cape Times* correspondent 1948a). We also learn from the exhibition’s reportage that sculptures in the exhibition were apparently placed ‘at intervals down the centre of the galleries and on either side of the doorways’ (*Cape Times* correspondent 1948a).

A more speculative account is mentioned in a letter from a Ms Elizabeth Winston addressed to Le Roux Smith Le Roux in May, 1950, who says that an image appeared in American newspapers bearing the caption:

Queen Elizabeth Acclaims Sekoto, Painter; Since Queen Elizabeth visited the Tate Gallery in London, Sekoto, a South African painter, has skyrocketed to fame (quoted by Winston 1950).

Winston identifies herself as Sekoto’s representative in America and asks for more details of the exhibition at the Tate and the Queen’s actual reaction to his paintings. To which Le Roux respond that though he cannot offer further information about that exact image, it is very possible that during the Queen’s ‘fairly lengthy visit’ to the South African exhibition on 15 October, 1948,⁵⁴ she may have indeed ‘paused longer before the works of Sekoto than before others’ (Le Roux 1950). An article in the *Cape Times* however, dated 16 October 1948, does mention that the Queen expressed particular interest in Sekoto and that she informed Rothenstein that she thought the exhibition

54. This date we gather from an exhibition overview by the *Cape Argus* towards the end of the its tour (1949a).

to be ‘a splendid enterprise, which showed South African initiative’ (*Cape Times* 1948g).

The limited and somewhat unenthusiastic British response to the show was unsurprising for some back at home. Mr Cope, SAAA secretary, is quoted as saying that ‘no one in South Africa expected for a moment that the exhibition would take Europe by storm’ (*Cape Times* 1948f). This sentiment is furthered by one of the contributing artists, Maurice van Essche who, in a letter to the editor of the *Cape Times*, writes that while he found the works to have been carefully selected to cover a wide range of subjects and styles, ‘did anyone expect that the exhibition would start a revolution in London?’ (1948) Another letter to the editor of the *Cape Times* from Mr Michaelis, raises the question of why any of the works were sent in the first place if no one believed in their exceptional quality, saying “Oh cry the beloved country!” (1948b).

Michaelis had actually sent an earlier letter to the *Cape Times* editor on 7 September 1948 entitled ‘Pack Up S.A. London Art Exhibition’, which stated that other than the smattering of reports from the British press, the critics had indeed done the South African exhibition a kindness by completely ignoring it. He condemns the selection committee’s opaque process,⁵⁵ saying that it resulted in a choice of works that were ‘mediocre, stupid and dull’ (Michaelis 1948a). Not to mention the waste of public funds! (Michaelis then calls for the show’s tour to be cut completely to save on further embarrassment). Another commentator calls it a straight ‘shocker’ (Zoccola 1948).

Many other respondents went so far as to list the artists who should have been included in the exhibition, saying that their presence on the show would have averted the otherwise ‘withering’ (Michaelis 1948b) criticism. Where, one member of the art public asks, was the South African National Gallery’s former director and stalwart art practitioner, Edward Roworth?⁵⁶

In a final blow, a memorandum was issued by DF Malan himself, which seems to reflect his truer opinion of the diplomatic exercise begun by Smuts his predecessor. In it, Malan criticises the selection committee for being

55. Bernard Lewis echoes this sentiment in his letter to the editor saying that the reason the selection committee chose not to show the works to the South African public before they were sent abroad was merely because they wished to avoid criticism and controversy (1948b).

56. The National Gallery was at that time without a director. Since its inception, the gallery collection had been overseen by a board of trustees under an unpaid “honorary” director. This position had, since the opening of the actual National Gallery building in 1930, been filled by Michaelis professors such as John Wheatley and the Edward Roworth. Following Roworth’s official retirement in May of 1948, he recommended that a permanent paid position be advertised. (*Cape Times*, ‘Professor E. Roworth to Retire’ 13 May 1948) His successor, H.J. Paris was only inaugurated in early 1949.

‘unprofessional and doctrinaire’ (Cape Times correspondent 1949), and the SAAA for the fact that the exhibition was never, after all, shown in its country of origin.

The exhibition tour however, continued doggedly to Canada in late March of 1949 whereupon the *Argus* Art Critic provided a critical overview of the exhibition’s run. Interestingly, his versioning of the responses to the show are resoundingly positive – saying that international critics praised the show’s ‘novelty’, and that it was met with a ‘livelier appreciation than printed comment might have suggested’ (Art Critic 1949).

Around the same time, a report in the *Argus* states that further invitations for exchange exhibitions with the Union had been received internationally (*Cape Argus* 1949b). We learn too that the idea of touring more exhibitions locally was also in the air. To these suggestions, the newly appointed (and first officially contracted) director of the South African National Gallery in Cape Town, Mr John Paris, was quick to remark that though the state of many local collections was fairly abysmal and might not be fit for circulation, he and the SAAA were ‘in complete agreement with the principle of art exhibitions to bring art and culture to out-of-the-way centres’ (*Cape Times* 1949).

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ILLUSTRATIONS

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I. In preparation: articles from the Cape Times and Cape Times weekend supplement. Left, Unpacking British Art 5-11-47; right, Our National Gallery November, 1936.

provisional dates for the exhibition of
Contemporary British Paintings and Drawings
1947-8

BLOEMFONTEIN	–	SEPT/OCT, 1947
DURBAN	–	OCT/NOV, 1947
CAPE TOWN	–	NOV, 1947
PORT ELIZABETH	–	DEC, 1947
JOHN ROTHENSTEIN IN S.A.		IN SPRING, 1948
PIETERMARITZBURG	–	APRIL/MAY, 1948
JOHANNESBURG	–	MAY, 1948
PRETORIA	–	??, 1948*

II. It is only possible to determine the exact dates of the show from the press clippings at the time. There are a number of references to the general location of the exhibition according to month but not to the day. In the case of the show in Cape Town we can deduce its opening day to be 15 November, 1947 from an article in the *Cape Times*, *Weekend Magazine*, 15 November, 1947, "British Spirit in Art: An exhibition of contemporary British art will open at the National Gallery today". Judging by the general timeline of each show we can assume that each lasted for approximately four weeks including installation, deinstallation, packing and transporting to the next venue.

III. *Cover of exhibition catalogue for the Exhibition of Contemporary British Paintings and Drawings, 1947. Published by the British Council, London.*

University of Cape Town

S.A.N.G. - Cuts: - Indian articles - 1903-49

CONTEMPORARY
BRITISH PAINTINGS

Free at 30

AND
DRAWINGS



SOUTH AFRICA

1947-8



IV.



V.



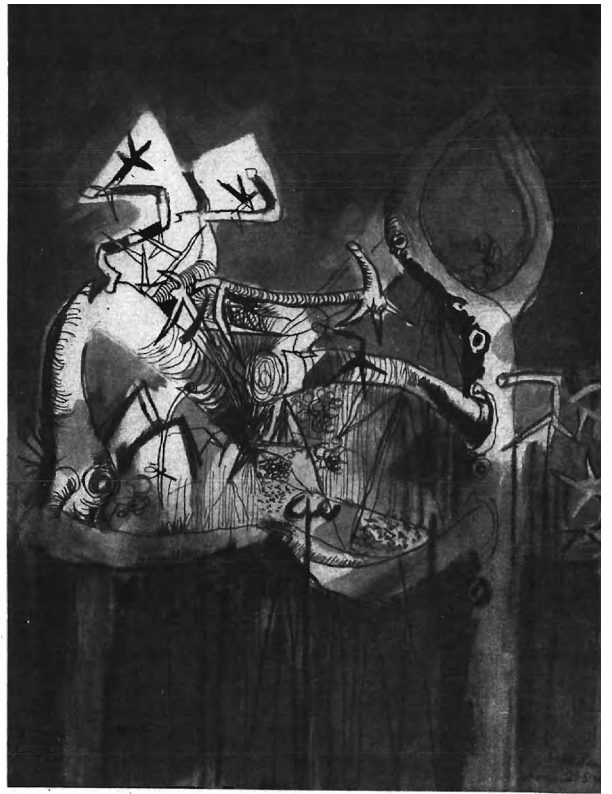
VI.



VII.



VIII.



Thorns (115)

GRAHAM SUTHERLAND

IX. *Graham Sutherland, Thorns, 1945, 16"x12", watercolour. Opposite page: IV. Gwen John, Girl Reading (or The Convalescent), 1918-9, 16"x12", oil. V. Augustus John, Standing Figure of a Woman – Study for 'The Way to the Sea', c.1909, 17"x11", pencil drawing. VI. Walter Sickert, The Mantlepiece, 1907, 30"x20", oil. VII. Matthew Smith, Nude, u.d. 23"x28", oil. VIII. Wyndham Lewis, Portrait of the Artist's Wife, c.1937-40, 29.5"x24", oil.*



XIII..Paul Nash, *We Are Making a New World*, 1918, 27.5"x35.5", oil. Opposite page: X. Ben Nicholson, *Painting*, 1938, 24"x36", oil. XI. Paul Nash, *The Two Serpents (or Snakes in the Woodpile)*, c.1929-2937, 36"x28", oil. XII. Claude Rogers, *Still Life with Globe*, u.d., 24"x29.5", oil.

POST CARD

Printed by Colin Martin Limited, London SE22 8HQ

Paul Nash: *We are Making a New World*

Imperial War Museum

Cat. No. 1146

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XIV.

XIV. Sir Charles Rey, acting president of the South African Association of Arts opens the Exhibition of Contemporary British Paintings and Drawings at the South African National Gallery. XV. Ruth Prowse oversees the hanging of Paul Nash's Two Serpents at the South African National Gallery.

XV.



XVI. The Cape Times article 'Attitude to Modern Art Criticised: Those People who "Know What They Like"', 3-12-47, covers a talk by artist Rhoda Pepys on Dec. 3 at 1.15pm. And a final talk on Dec. 5 at 1.15pm by Jean Welz, "The Artist Must be Modern" (title unknown but suggested in the Argus article of that title on 5-12-47).

works by every individual painter of importance during the past 30 years, there are, for instance, no examples of the work of John Nash or R. O. Dunlop—it provides a very representative cross-section of British painting during that period; a period rich in artistic achievement and development, despite its two major wars, its slumps and its background of world unrest.

The early century saw the first real impact of French Impressionism on British art, which is so strongly apparent in the work of Wilson Steer, of Sickert and the New English Art Club, and this tendency was further developed by the Camden Town Group, whose outstanding members such as Ginner, Gilman and Augustus John took the tendency still further along lines of personal experiment.

Given in the Gallery two or three times a week, when those anxious to learn to enjoy contemporary painting will hear both criticism and analysis. The exhibition is a rare opportunity which may not recur for some years, and should on no account be missed by anybody interested in art matters.

MISS IRMA STERN arrived in Johannesburg to-day after holding an exhibition of her pictures, which was opened by the Union Minister-Pleipotentiary in Paris, Mr. W. G. Farnimer, in the Wildenstein Gallery. She will arrive in Cape Town on Saturday.

Mr. A. M. Campbell will leave by air to-morrow for Port Elizabeth to attend a South African

Picture Sale

I SPENT yesterday morning watching people buy pictures. Highest price of the day was 210 guineas for a small Peter Wenning still life in oils which had been exhibited at Government House during the Royal visit.

Anything which had the magic words "Loaned to Government House for the Royal visit" went at an increased price. Proof of this is the fact that a far better Wenning—a pastel of the Malay Quarter—which had not, however, been at Government House, went comparatively cheaply at 75 guineas.

A large Volschenk "Sunlight on the Mountains"—seen by the Royal Family during their stay here—reached 180 guineas.

These were the pick of the late Mr. A. Spilhaus' large collection.

Among his other paintings dispersed by auction, Hugo Naude reached 90 guineas for a small Namaqualand flower scene, and a Frans Oerder went to 80 guineas. Several Allerley Glossops also aroused keen competition.

Slump in Doré

A LITTLE while back I commented on a huge sale of Gustav Doré's canvases which was to take place in New York because they had been stored in a warehouse and no one had come forward for years to claim them or pay storage fees.

A Cape Town owner of one of Doré's oil paintings asked me anxiously what I thought his picture was worth? Had it gone down in value?

The answer, I am sorry to say, is in the affirmative. The pictures which were sold in New York had originally been valued at £60,000. The whole batch of 82 paintings, drawings and photographs went at the sale for £2,100.

The storage company didn't mind then, as their bill was only something over £1,000. But the man who bought the pictures was arrested the next day for passing bad cheques!

Lectures to Educate Public On Modern Art

A SERIES of lectures has been arranged by the South African Association of Arts to bring the collection of pictures in the British Art Exhibition before a public with full understanding of modern artistic trends.

The exhibition is being held in the National Gallery, Government-avenue, Cape Town, and will be opened to-day at 11 a.m. by the Administrator, Mr. J. G. Carinus.

SUBJECTS OF TALKS

The speakers and their subjects will be as follows:

Tuesday, November 18, 1.15 p.m. Miss Ruth Prowse—"An Introduction to the Exhibition"

Thursday, November 20, 4 p.m. Miss Nerine Desmond—"Modern British Watercolourists"

Friday, November 21, 1.15 p.m. Dr. Johannes Meintjes—"Hedendaagse Britse Schilderkunst"

Sunday, November 23, 4 p.m.: Mr. Sam Butler—"Saying what you see"

Tuesday, November 25, 1.15 p.m. Mr. Meivyn Simmers—"Some Aspects of Modern English Drawing"

Thursday, November 27, 4 p.m. Mr. Gregoire Boonzaier—"Hedendaagse Neigings in die Engelse Schilderkunst"

Friday, November 28, 1.15 p.m. Mr. Deane Anderson—"Realism in the Abstract in British Painting"

Sunday, November 30, 4 p.m.: Mr. R. K. Cape—"The Progress of English Painting"

The British Council is sending to the Union the chief of its Art and Sciences Division, Mr. Brian Kennedy Cooke, to study the reaction of South Africa to the exhibition of contemporary British art.

Mr. Kennedy Cooke was formerly governor of a province in the Sudan. He will spend about a month touring the Union.

Cape Times

Cape Times "Too Little" Modern Art in S.A. Galleries

MR. J. G. CARINUS, Administrator of the Cape, opening an exhibition of British contemporary paintings, water colours and drawings at the National Gallery, Cape Town, on Saturday, said that modern art was poorly represented in the Union's art galleries and most South Africans were familiar with it only through reproductions.

He announced that the South African Association of Arts was well-ahead with plans to send a reciprocal representative exhibition of South African art to Britain next year.

The exhibition was organised by the association in collaboration with the British Council and the United Kingdom Information Office.

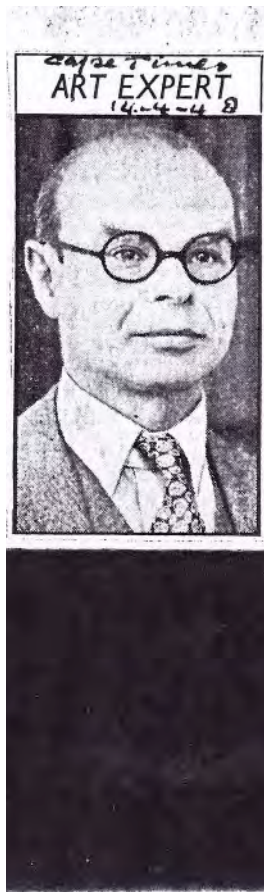
17-11-47
Picture on page 47

Cape Times Forged Old Masters: One Year's Gaol

AMSTERDAM.—The Dutch painter, van Meergeren, who forged several paintings which appeared to have been painted by 17th century masters, was sentenced yesterday to one year's imprisonment. To prove that he was able to imitate the masters, van Meergeren painted a picture before the trial which passed examination by experts.

Sums totalling £700,000 were said to be involved in the sales of the faked old masters.

13-11-47



For most of his life Sir John Rothenstein has been involved with art and artists. Sir William Rothenstein, his father, knew Degas and Toulouse-Lautrec and as Principal of the Royal College of Art encouraged the likes of Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth.

After leaving Oxford University he spent two years in the United States as an assistant professor and returned to England to take a Ph.D. in art history at London University. He then became Director of the City Art Gallery of Leeds and Sheffield. Besides being a

XVII. South African newspapers both herald and query Rothenstein's status as "art expert" in the run-up to his return visit in April, 1948. XVIII. An image and excerpt from Rothenstein's *Modern English Painters*, Vol. 1-2. London: Macdonald, 1952.

INTRODUCTION

the artist is, in a sense, more not less creates, which is not to say that the work is not comprehensible and more attractive than before, someone saying to my father, after a long time, far from writing "A Shropshire Lad" (I was not capable of reading it). Nor do I overvalue the artist having an imaginative comprehensibility, for example, or singleness of purpose, to realize them in his art but not in his forms, nevertheless, an element in his art, the greater our knowledge of a person, the more we understand how apparently inconsistent elements form parts of a whole which can be considered one whole. And so it comes that the artistic problem



XIX. An image in the Cape Argus (24-4-48) captures John Rothenstein's encounter with his own portrait by his father, William Rothenstein, in the South African National Gallery collection.

Plans for Collection of S.A. Art Approved

Works to be Exhibited in Tate Gallery

FINAL arrangements by the South African Association of Arts for the preliminary collection of works which will be sent overseas for the exhibition of contemporary South African art, have been approved by the Government, said a statement issued by the association yesterday.

An immediate appeal is being made to some 70 artists in the Union to submit paintings and sculptures for judging by a selection board in Cape Town at the end of May.

The exhibition will, it is planned, reach England in time for its first showing in the Tate Gallery, London, in the autumn.

SELECTION BOARD

The selection board, which has been drawn from artists and non-technical experts in all parts of the country, is composed of the following:

The representative at the time of the Minister of Education (chairman); Professor M. Bokhorst (Pretoria University); Mr. Connell Maggs (collector, Johannesburg); Professor O. P. Oxley (Professor of Fine Arts, Natal University College); Miss Ruth Prange (artist, Cape Town); Mr. Jeanne Anderson (artist and critic, Cape Town); Mr. G. Long (artist and lecturer, Maritzburg); Professor J. L. M. Franken (University of Stellenbosch); Mr. J. C. Heath (artist and principal of the technical college art school, Port Elizabeth); Professor L. W. Thornton White (University of Cape Town) and Professor F. E. J. Maithebe (University of Stellenbosch).

The association's statement said the Director of the Tate Gallery, Dr. John Rothenstein, is coming to South Africa to act as adviser to the selection board. After a rapid tour taking in the other provinces, he will reach Cape Town in time for the final selection, probably in the last week in May.

comprehensive and included painters and sculptors of all schools. The exhibition would be small and concentrate on quality.

After the exhibition returns from overseas it will be taken on tour in South Africa so that the public can judge it in the light of what criticism or praise it has gathered in other countries.

The Government has provided £7,300 to cover the expenses of the exhibition.

CANADA'S INVITATION

"The exhibition will be the most important undertaking of its kind ever made by South Africa," said the statement. "The exhibition will also be taken to Holland, Belgium and France. An official invitation has also been extended to South Africa by the Canadian National Gallery and negotiations are being made to take the exhibition to the United States before it is sent home."

The Association was acting as the agent of the Government and took responsibility for the detailed organisation of collecting the works of art. For this purpose a list of 75 artists had been drawn up as a practical working basis.

Up to six works were being collected or invited to represent each artist.

The list of 75 names was

IRMA STERN EXHIBITION



Miss Irma Stern, the well-known South African artist, standing beside "Mother and Child", one of the 54 paintings which she is exhibiting at the Association of Arts Gallery, Cape Town, until March 20. The exhibition was opened yesterday by Sir Evelyn Baring, High Commissioner for the United Kingdom.

Paintings by James Thackwray

AN exhibition that should create interest among the less radical section of Cape Town's art lovers was opened in Ashbey's Galleries yesterday by Dr. A. H. Jonker, M.P. It represents the work of Mr. James Thackwray, who is a newcomer to the galleries of the city.

Quiet and confident in character, these exhibits are divided equally between landscapes and flower studies, and the fifty-odd oils on view reveal the artist's sincerity and honesty of approach.

Relying on his drawing and a careful assessment and balancing of colour values, Mr. Thackwray achieves a great deal. He is apparently happier and freer when painting in the field, though inclined to seek the more obvious subjects and the stereotyped setting.

His accomplished handling of tones, however, indicates that, with wider experience and the development of a stronger technique, he will become a sound painter. "Wheatfields near Durbanville" (No. 1) and the pictures of Manne are very satisfying.


His flower studies show, perhaps, undue restraint and his very formal compositions have not always been rendered into successful pictures.

This exhibition remains open until March 31.

E.M.

9-3-48. THE CAPE ARGUS, TUESDAY, M





List of members on the selection committee for the South African exhibition abroad. One of them, Geoffrey Long, was an artist, as well as an art writer for the (locally) highly regarded journal Studio, and responsible for writing the exhibition's catalogue essay.

University of Cape Town



XX. Selection Committee peruses submissions of artworks at the Sout African National Gallery during John Rothenstein's visit to the Union in April, 1948. Oppositie page: preliminary artist list for the Exhibition of Contemporary South African Painting, Drawing and Sculpture made after the April meeting of the selection committee. XXI. Preliminary list of participating artists in the Exhibition of Contemporary South African Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture, following the meetings of the selection committee in April, 1948.

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIALList of Artists for preliminary collection of works from
WHICH OVERSEAS Exhibition will be selected.

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Pieter Wenning | 26 Freida Look |
| 2. Hugo Naude | 27 Strat Caldecott |
| 3. Jean Welz | 28 Harry Erever |
| 4. Hendrik Pierneef | 29 Francois Krige |
| 5. Moses Kottler (sc) | 30 Alexis Preller |
| 6. Irma Stern | 31 Willem Hendrikz (sc) |
| 7. Cecil Haggis | 32 Maurice van Essche |
| 8. Lippy Lipschitz (sc) | 33 Graham Bell |
| 9. Le Roux Smith le Roux | 34 Charles Peers |
| 10 Maggie Läubser | 35 Ferguson |
| 11 Gregoire Boonzaier | 36 Pieters |
| 12 Maud Sumner | 37 Andersen |
| 13 Gerard Sekoto | 38 Kay |
| 14 Walter Battiss | 39 Amschewitz |
| 15 Woolf Kibel | 40 Eddy |
| 16 Enslin du Flessis | 41 Gwelo Goodman |
| 17 Terence McGaw | 42 Gordon Pilkington |
| 18 Bob Broadley | 43 George Pilkington |
| 19 Neville Lewis | 44 Roworth |
| 20 Nerine Desmond | 45 Wiles |
| 21 Anton Hendriks | etc |
| 22 Mary Vaughan Williams | |
| 23 Peter Leftwich | |
| 24 Elsa Dziomba (sc) | |
| 25 John Dromfield | |

sc - sculptor.



XXII. Artworks are packed and travel to the Tate Gallery, London in August, 1948. Opposite page: beginning of the final list of artists and works included in the Exhibition of Contemporary South African Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture (opening 20 September, 1948 at the Tate).

Details of Works of Art Selected for Overseas Exhibition.

Artist	Title of Works	Size and Medium	Value.
Walter Battis	The Eternal Palace (1948)	36x30. oil	250.gns.
	Cattle and Egrets (1948.)	30x24. oil	200.gns.
	The Rock Shelter (1948)	19x23.w-colour	100.gns.
Graham Bell	The Cafe. (1937/38)	45x36. oil	200.gns.
G.Boonstra	The Yellow Book (1948)	20x24. Oil.	70.gns.
	Boians at Simonstown. (1948)	21x17. Oil.	50.gns.
	Landscape at Pella (1947)	28x22. oil.	75.gns.
Robert Broadley	Snow in Lancashire	16x20.oil.	40.gns.
	Portrait of Marine Desmond (1948)	13x17. oil.	40.gns.
B.Caldesott	The old Pier	14x19. oil.	130.gns.
M.E.Goetser	A Dusty Shelf (1930)	24x19. oil.	200.gns.
Elsa Osiomba	Modern Essay (1947)	16.high Aluminium	300.gns.
	Soft Ball Player (1948)	19.high Bronze	250. gns
	Fr.Robert Broom (1947/48)	Bronze	250.gns.
N.Desmond	Near Wellington (1944)	16x12.w-colour	21.gns.
	The Bridge (1947)	17x13.w-colour	21.
	Street in the Rain (1947)		15.
Lang Nixon	Cape Malay Quarters	11x16.pen or wash	16.gns.
	House on the Corner	16x12.pen or wash	20.gns.
J.Fronsfield	Queen Mfrangoon-Davies in a Mouth in the Country. (1946)	13x31.drawing	16.gns.
	Shoe Cart, Capetown	16x18.drawing	22.gns.
	Coloured Cement Swellers (1948)	14x14 ink on dye	60.gns
	Old Woman: Egan (1936)	25x21 dye	175.gns.
E.H. Glesels	Flowers and Fruits	15x12.w-colour	15.gns.
	Still Life with Patterned Cloth	18x24. oil	66.gns.
	Flower Piece	19x23.oil.	65.gns.
	The Barn, Klostersdal		
	Stellenbosch	23x19. oil.	75.gns.
	Wicklenburgh Square	30x25.oil.	100.gns.
	Landscape, Stellenbosch	23x19.oil.	75.gns.
Panie Ploff	Love's Sorrow	11. High.Marbre	100.gns.
A.Goodman	The Bridge	15x12. oil.	75.gns.
A.Mandriks	Coloured Girl	19x24.oil on tempera	75.gns.
	Village near Tucca. (1945)	23x18.oil.	75.gns.
P.Earling.	Figuration	17x13. w-colour	12.gns.
Wuth Baden	Still Life with Begonias	24x20.oil.	50.gns.
F. Bertalet	The Shells	20x16. oil.	20.gns.
Cecil Higge	Leaves	20x14. oil.	95.gns.
	Flans in Orchard	14x18. oil.	140.gns.
	Still Life with Saw Saw. (1948)	24x20.oil.	120.gns.

Artist	Title of Works	Size and Medium	Value
Cecil Higgs	Woman and Girl (1948)	16x19. w-colour.	50.gns.
	Focks (1948)	12x15. w-colour.	35.gns.
T. Hendriks	Mariga	44.high. bronze.	200.gns.
	Mashona Native Head Washona	15.high. bronze	100.gns.
	The Martyr		150.gns.
Wolff Kibel	Portrait of Artist's Wife	20x20. gouache	50.gns.
	Three figures	9x14.w-colour	30.gns.
F. Krige.	Landscape, Oudtshoorn (1940)	17x20. oil.	50.gns.
	The Store, Basutoland. (1946)	16x13. oil.	40.gns.
	Portrait of Italian Girl. (1944)	16x10. oil	30.gns.
	Brig. Armstrong's Batman,		
	Philomena Mopie. (1943)	13x17. pencil drawing	20.gns.
	Landscape over Saldanha Bay.	16x12. pen on wash.	20.gns.
	(1948)		
W. Kottler	Head of Child	13. high. bronze.	150.gns.
	Mother and Child.	28. high. wood.	250.gns.
	Recumbent Wife	stone	250.gns.
	Native Woman	30. high. wood	250.gns.
	Head of a Girl	13. high. bronze.	150.gns.
	Heidi	62. high. wood.	300.gns.
I. Lipschitz	Sea Made (1944)	Colmaristone	250.gns.
	Africa (1945-46)	Ebony	250.gns.
	End en Beginning (1942)	Yellow Wood	200.gns.
	Psalm (1946-47)	Onyx	250.gns.
Neville Lewis	Blind Malay	20x24. oil.	250.gns.
	Chief Tshakedi Khama	30x26. oil.	300.gns.
	Portrait of Mrs. da Plessis.	12x16. oil.	50.gns.
W. Laubser	The Harvesters	22x28. oil.	150.gns.
	Cat and Flowers	22x20. oil.	120.gns.
	Landscape with sheep	20x16. oil.	100.gns.
Freida Lock	Still life with Grapes	15x20. oil.	50.gns.
	Interior: Woman Sewing	20x24. oil.	60.gns.
Le Poux	Heat Wave	15x20. oil.	50.gns.
	Sebras	14x19.w-colour	20. ns.
	Deserted Karoo Farm	30x19. oil.	250.
Terence Mc Gaw	Still Life	27x19. oil.	60.gns.
	Spring Landscape	25x18. oil.	100.gns.
	Portrait of Poff Lefevbra. (1947)	20x24. oil.	150.gns.
	Seascape (1948)	32x24. oil.	200.gns.
G. Michaelis	Cape Salmon	24x18. oil.	100.gns.
	Austrian	7x 9. drawing.	15.gns.
	African	8x12. drawing.	15.gns.
	Native Study	5x11. w-colour	15. gns.
		drawing.	
Witford Barbarten	Torso	25. high. Wood	100. gns.
Hajo Waude	Field Flowers	24x20. oil.	150.gns.
	Diamond	13x10. oil.	75.gns.
	Fishing Harbour at Hermanus	12x10. oil.	75.gns.
P. Newman	Ambergrie (1946.)	20x24. oil.	60.gns.
P. Ollmans	Awakening	9. high. Wood	75. gns.
	Adam and Eve	19. high. Wood.	75.gns.
	Thinker	19. high. Wood.	60.gns.
H. Pierneef.	Maroneberg. (1948)	22x15. w-colours	30.gns.
		drawing	
	Baobab Trees (1937)	55x41. oil.	350.gns.
	First rain Lichtenburg. (1917)	24x16. oil.	150.gns.
	Wild Spring (lilac) Tree (1946)	17x23. oil.	100.gns.
	Teres Salem (1925)	oil.	200.gns.
	Fort Said (1926)	19x12. w-colour	40.gns.
		drawing.	

<u>Artist</u>	<u>Title of works</u>	<u>Size and Medium</u>	<u>Value</u>
A. Prallier	Head of Christ	24x28.oil.	70.gns.
	Basuto Allegory	36x30.oil.	85.gns.
	The Krasl	36x28.oil.	85.gns.
	Felic	14x16.oil.	60.gns.
	Nidebele Girl	16x20.oil.	60.gns.
Paton	Landscape at Dargle	24x20.oil.	70.gns.
Charles Peers	Ships at Capetown	12x 9. w-colour	50.gns.
	Ruins of mission Station		
	Reliefontein	21x13. w-colour	45.gns.
Irma Stern	Assandi Girl	23x18. charcoal	45.gns.
	Matussi Woman in Red	28x36.oil.	400.gns.
	Chrysanthemums	33x23.oil.	200.gns.
	Arab Priest	34x37.oil.	450.gns.
	Manbela Woman	24x18. ink drawing	40.gns.
M. Stainbank	Mamathoka (Joy of Living)	18. high. soap stone	£135.
Maud Sumner	The Bathroom	21x28.oil.	120.gns.
	Landscape in France	25x21.oil.	120.gns.
	Bathorpe under Snow	24x18. w-colour	25.gns.
	The Letter (Martinade)	24x19.oil.	100.gns.
Sefoto. G.	Sophiatown, Evening	19x15.oil.	60.gns.
	Sixpence a Door	28x20.oil.	70.gns.
	Three Piesins	18x23.oil.	70.gns.
	Donkeys	24x20.oil.	75.gns.
G. Steynberg	Portrait of Artists Wife	17. high. bronze	300.gns.
	Mask	marbre	200.gns.
Harry Trevor	Still Life with Indian Rug	27x35.oil.	2.250.
B. Tyrrell	Back Married Woman (1947)	7x15.w-colour drawing.	12.gns
	Subj Married Woman (1947)	9x14. w-colour drawing	12.gns
N. van Esche	Portrait-Joyce	14x21.oil.	50.gns
	Tropical Forest	14x20.oil.	50.gns
	Native Woman Sleeping	26x16. w-colour. drawing	45.gns
van Rouw	Paul Kruger	12. high. bronze	180.gns
P. van Heerden	Winter Wellington	24x20.oil.	40.gns
	Landscape near Wellington (1946)	30x22.oil.	60.gns
M. Vaughan Williams	Group of Native Children (1946)	15x17. poster colour	20.gns
Alex Wagner	Ball of Pock. (1947)	6x 7. oil.	30.gns
	Crucifixion (1938)	14x20. w-colour	20.gns
Jean Vals	Mother and Child (1944)	10x12.oil.	50.gns
	Forms from South African Nature	20x16.oil.	100.gns
	Avocado Pear (1945)	19x16.oil.	100.gns
	Seated Figure (1943)	6x 6.oil.	30.gns
	Still Life with Earthenware (1947)		
	Landscape (1946)	28x36.oil.	150.gns
P. Venning	Cottage in the Rain Newlands	23x17.oil.	100.gns
	Malay Quarter with Sheep	12x 9.oil	2.500.
	Peacock Feather	oil	400.gns
	Location in Johannesburg	oil	40.gns
	Bishopscourt	oil	500.gns
J. Leonard	Portrait of S. S. t. Jeger	oil	400.gns
	Made	24x22.oil.	2. 60.
		25x34.oil.	2. 60.

<u>Artist</u>	<u>Title of Works</u>	<u>Size and Medium</u>	<u>Value</u>
<u>Works added in London.</u>			
Walter Battiss	Niagara Falls, (1948)	23x29.oil.	150.gns
	Seaside Sports (1948)	21x25.Woodcut	25.gns
Enalin du Plessis	The Sheik Joseph's Tomb	oil.	100.gns
Works received by Beck and Hollitsers with the other exhibits but which did not appear on the list they got from S.A.			
C.F. Angas	A Malay Woman	water colour	40.gns
	Kayser the Bushman Tracker, in his National costume	" " " " "	40.gns
J. Baines	Graddock Farm Port Elizabeth	oil.	500.gns
	Attending to the Wounded after the engagement at Waterkloof	oil	500.gns
	Hunting Hippo at Makoba	oil	500.gns
	Killing Rhino, between Botletle and Zambezi River	oil	500.gns
	Settlers landing at Algoa Bay	oil	500.gns
J. . Bowler	Table Bay with St Lawrence entering the Bay	(unframed)	50.gns
	Table Bay with East Indian men.	water colour	50.gns
	Lutheran Church, Strand Street Capetown	water colour	50.gns
S. Daniel	A Brooch Vannah Hat	" " " " "	40.gns
	Boers returning from Hunt	" " " " "	40.gns
Sir Charles M'Olley	Going to Protestant Church	" " " " " (unframed)	40.gns
	Bottentot Peasants	drawing (unframed)	40.gns
F.J. M'Ons	The Fitch Doctor	oil	60.gns
Charles Lambert and Scott	Table Bay	oil	75.gns
William Longschmidt	Long Street, Capetown		100.gns
P.D. Oerder	Via Pretoria	oil	400.gns
J.C. Poortmans	Cape Farm on a Sunday afternoon,	watercolour	40.gns

exp. Gebr. Schreier.
C. A. M. de laan

AN HET STEDELIJK MUSEUM

University of Cape Town

XXIII. *Final list of artists and works included in the Exhibition of Contemporary South African Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture (opening 20 September, 1948 at the Tate).*

XXIV. *Cover of catalogue for the Exhibition of Contemporary South African Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture, 1948. Published by the South African Association of Arts, Cape Town.*

University of Cape Town



SMA
1948-18

SOUTH AFRICAN ASSOCIATION OF ARTS

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MR C. T. TE WATER

VICE-PRESIDENT

SIR CHARLES REY K.B. C.M.G.

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MR R. K. COPE AND MISS C. JEFFERIES

FOREWORD

BY

THE HON SIR JASPER RIDLEY K.C.V.O.

CHAIRMAN OF THE TATE GALLERY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

IN 1938 "*A Century of Canadian Art*" was shown at the Tate and the Gallery is now once again privileged to hold an Exhibition from another nation of the British Commonwealth. This is the first representative exhibition of South African painting ever to be shown in this country, and in welcoming it the Trustees wish to express their gratitude to the Union Government for having sponsored so important a project. They are also indebted to the South African Association of Arts, whose organisation has been responsible for the selection and assembly of the works here shown.

Until recently South African Art can scarcely be said to have had a continuous history, and the contemporary movement which is its most vital manifestation has developed during the present century. It is mainly with this latest phase that the Exhibition deals, although a small selection of earlier work is included, as an interesting prelude, detached in its historical context from the main body of the Exhibition.

It is, perhaps, surprising how little is known of South Africa's contribution in this field. As is to be expected from a country that is characterised by the most varied and majestic scenery, her painters' talents are best expressed in an essentially landscape art. This feeling for natural beauty is indeed not without similarity to the major contribution of our own British tradition. In subject, style and vision these paintings have already a national character of their own.



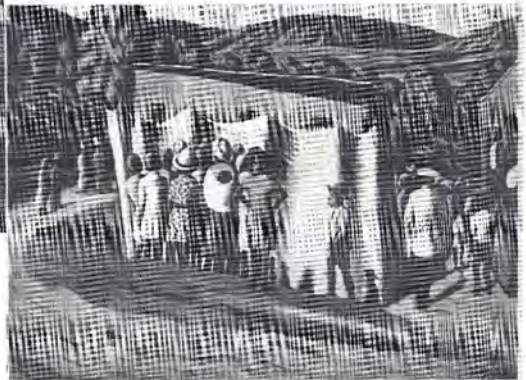
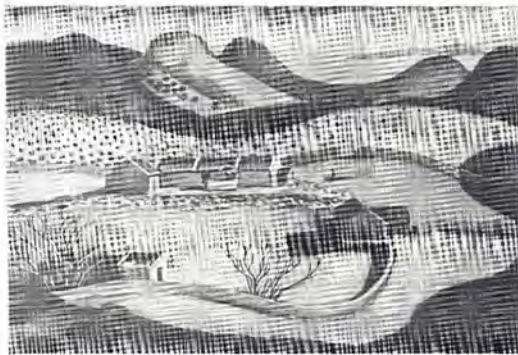


XXV.

XXV. *The historical prelude to the South African exhibition included works such as Lambert and Scott's Table Bay, c.1720-30, oil . XXVI. Samuel Daniell's Boers Returning From Hunting, c.1804, 16"x12", watercolour.*



XXVI.



XXVIII.

XXIX.

XXVIII. *le Roux Smith le Roux*, *Deserted Karoo Farm*, c.1920-30, 30"x19", oil. XXIX. *Gerard Sekoto*, *Sixpence a Door*, 1946-7, 28"x20", oil.

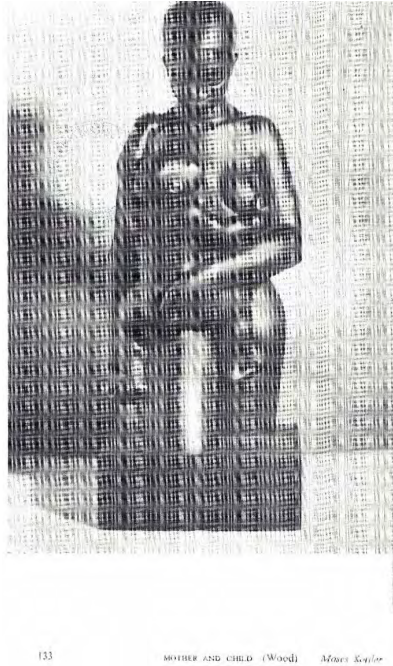
XXX.



XXXI.



XXX. *Irma Stern, Asandi Girl, 1942, 23"x18", charcoal.* XXXI. *Neville Lewis, Blind Malay, 20"x24", oil.*



XXXII.

XXXII. *Moses Kottler, Mother and Child, c.1941, 9"x24", wood.* XXXIII *Alexis Preller, Basuto Allegory, 1947, 36"x30", oil.*



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BASUTO ALLEGORY

Alexis Preller

XXXIII.

The actual opening date at the Tate, it can be noted from the acceptance list of invitees to the private view and reception given by the High Commissioner for the Union of South Africa, was brought forward to the 20/9/48 and from later articles we gather that closed on 31/10/48. The exhibition took up 3 galleries (the Modern Foreign Wing) for a month.

From transport reports, it becomes clear that works from Ottawa were only returned on 22-7-49. It is also mentioned in an article from the Argus in February 1949, that the tour between Canada and the United States would now last 6 months.

Rome was added to the list of possible exhibition venues at one point, then removed due to lack of funds (letter from Rothenstein 20-4-48). Te Waters, in later correspondence, is quoted as having raised the idea of the tour to Rome to take place between May and August 1949, as 'Italy, from the standpoint of reciprocity, is very important.' (letter from FH Theron 29-12-48).

XXXIV. Memorandum from the Department of External Affairs, Pretoria, u.d., p. 2.

2.

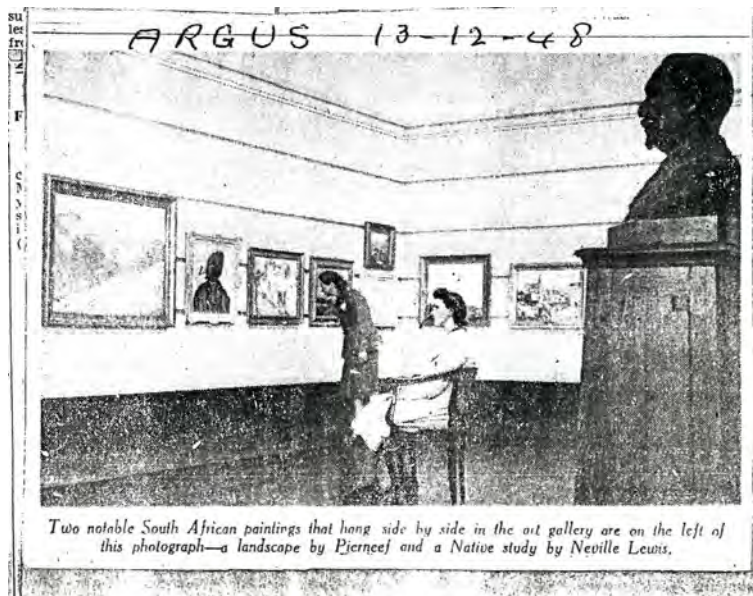
The first consideration of the Committee in making its choice was the artistic merit of the pictures, but an effort was made to include as far as possible those on South African subjects. An attempt has been made to present the spirit of contemporary South African painting and the exhibition should convey a good impression of trends in present day South African art.

None of the works of art is for sale and the object of the exhibition is the promotion of cultural relationships.

3. Final arrangements for the Exhibition have been made in London, and it has accordingly become immediately necessary to fix a circuit in advance for the Continent and America. The following dates are proposed:-

- 23. 9.48 to 23.10.48 - Tate Gallery, London.
- 15.11.48 to 30.11.48 - Holland.
- 1. 1.49 to 14. 1.49 - Belgium.
- 14. 2.49 to 28. 2.49 - France.
- 1. 4.49 to 30. 4.49 - Canada.
- 1. 6.49 to 30.6. 49 - America.

The exhibits, some of which are being reframed, should leave the Union for the United Kingdom early in August. The only fixed dates are for the exhibition in London and for departure for Canada at the beginning of March, 1949. However, the other dates have been approximately determined and may serve as a useful guide, in order that Union Missions on the Continent may arrange amongst themselves definite dates to suit their respective requirements, provided that the exhibits



XXXV.

XXXV. Roomview of exhibition. XXXVI. The Governor General and others pay close attention to Alexis Preller's Basuto Allegory at the opening of the South African exhibition in Ottawa, Canada in May, 1949. XXXVII. Opposite page: *a transcript of DF Malan's opening address* at the Tate Gallery, London issued by Mr Egeland on the opening night of the South African exhibition in September, 1948.



XXXVI.

THE SUNDAY TIMES, OCTOBER 3, 1914

87

London

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SOUTH AFRICA.

Previous page

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Maire, Mr. S.F.
Marshall, Viscount
Innes, Brigadier
Marriott, Mr. and
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Pryce-Jones, N a

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Mrs. Rowbottom
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APPENDIX

NB. *The Appendix to this stock book, which, rather than acting as an afterthought or illustrative supplement, offers a set of provisional conclusions generated by my own exchange, across time, with the objects and issues located (temporarily) in the 1940s case study. What results is a record of diplomatic curatorial engagement wherein the exhibition becomes a shifting site of visible negotiations; where the givenness of 'taste' and 'expertism' is objectified, scrutinised; and a border's porosity is the only fixed point.*

DIE TIJDELIKE SAARGELASTIGDE VAN DIE UNIE VAN SUID-AFRIKA
HET DIE EER OM

Mr. H.L.C. Jaffé
VRIENDELIK UIT TE NOOI NA DIE OPENING VAN 'N
TENTOONSTELLING VAN SUID-AFRIKAANSE KUNS, IN
DIE STEDELIJKE MUSEUM TE AMSTERDAM OP VRIJDAG 10 DESEMBER,
1948, OM 4 UUR N.M. ~~DIE OPENINGSTEGTIGHEID SAL WAARGENEEM~~
WORD DEUR

SY EKSELLENSIE PROF. DR. F. J. TH. RUTTEN,
MINISTER VAN ONDERWIJS, KUNSTE EN WETENSAPPE.

A.A.S.B. for 25 November
ALEXANDER GOGELWEG 2C,
DEN HAAG.

1a. Invitation to Mr H.L.C. Jaffé for the opening of the Exhibiton of Contemporary South African Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, December 1948. 1b,c. 'Temporary Exhibitions in Art Museums' by H.L.C. Jaffé, in Temporary and Travelling Exhibitions, Museums and Monuments – X series, 2nd Ed. UNESCO: Dusseldorf, 1963.

CHAPTER II

TEMPORARY EXHIBITIONS IN ART MUSEUMS

by H. L. C. JAFFÉ

INTRODUCTION

The importance attached to temporary exhibitions in the programmes of museums today is evidenced by the discussions on this subject which take place at almost every meeting of ICOM and of many national museum organizations, some of which are also ICOM National Committees. The present practice of showing only selected items of a collection on permanent exhibition has meant that many items are placed in storage, but there is no reason to assume that these are second- or third-rate objects and therefore unsuitable for exhibition. A storeroom frequently contains a large number of variants and duplicates of objects already on permanent exhibition and the occasion may arise when it would be interesting to exhibit them with what may be described as their 'family'. Moreover, these duplicates and variants acquired in the process of accumulating a collection would be welcomed as loans for exhibitions in many other museums. This change in museum practice has been a factor in increasing museum activities, as has the fact that a growing proportion of the public is becoming accustomed to visual education and to being influenced through visual experience.

PRINCIPLES AND METHODS

The general principles for the organization of exhibitions, from large-scale travelling national exhibitions to more modest exhibitions of local antiquities in the town hall, are basically similar. They are valid for large international exhibitions of art or small ones

of historical or archaeological interest or those devoted to surviving crafts. The first principle is that exhibitions have their own idiom, a visual language with its own syntax and grammar. They differ quite fundamentally from books; both have their task to perform in promoting education throughout the world but it would be a serious mistake (and one always made in the first years of experience with a new means of communication) to try to adapt the principles of the older to the newer means. Unlike books, which are the product of logical or associative thought processes, exhibitions are based on the observation of an object or objects.

Observation is the starting point, and experience, i.e., the simultaneous emotional and intellectual perception of the objects concerned, the aim. An exhibition organizer can provide this experience either by allowing the object itself to catch the visitor's attention and then shedding further light on it by means of other related objects, or by bringing out the mutual relationship between a number of objects which have one or more features in common.

Whichever method is chosen in assembling and arranging an exhibition—and the choice is likely to depend mainly on the subject matter—the emotional or educational effect on the visitor must be the first consideration. Thus, the organizer's first duty is to present his chosen material to the best advantage by facilitating observation to the greatest possible degree. The exhibition must be honest and trustworthy (hence its importance as a means of popular education), and its reliability must begin with the way in which the object is exposed to the public. The object

must speak for itself and any supplementary effect used must serve that purpose for the object on show, for its origin and significance is the purpose of the exhibition.

First, however, there must be a principle or unifying idea so that objects, whether paintings, historical objects or archaeological finds, fall as parts of a significant whole. This idea is usually reached by limitation to a clearly defined theme; sometimes it appears to be an arbitrary one, for example, in exhibitions of private collections where the personal taste of the collector is the only unifying element, but it is nevertheless essential.

THE VISITOR

Every exhibition must be arranged and explained primarily for the benefit of the visitor. This, for all the talk which it is stated here, is a particular task. Many museum directors only have a vague knowledge of the interests and capacity of appreciators no longer belong, as in the past, to a clearly defined social group whose tastes and inclinations were familiar, in a line at least, to the museum curator. The art gallery or historical museum expects visitors from all walks of life, local workers, as the source of vitality, should be given particular attention. Special thought should be given to children, the aged, the people from the surrounding countryside, and the foreign tourists.

Curators should attempt to attract groups and should aim at an exhibition which will provide an outlet for the visitor's interest and outlook.

Given the varied interests of the museum curator or the organizer, select as the theme of his exhibition a subject which will have special appeal to a specific group (in which case the exhibition is specially designed for that group) or related to a general human problem expected to arouse the interest of all groups. The problem is simple

University of Cape Town

- 1c. *In the post-war years, many exhibitions have been held (and received publicity in the specialist press) in which the general reaction was more or less concentrated upon the techniques used to the neglect of the objects shown. Such exhibitions, at least in my opinion, did more harm than good to the cause of visual education because the means become the end.*

H.L.C. Jaffé, Temporary
Exhibitions in Art Museums

I keep coming back to a compelling image of the lonely André Malraux, art theorist and French Minister of Cultural Affairs in the 1920s, standing in his office staring out at an expanse of black and white images laid out across the floor. A black and white picture of black and white pictures. He was editing his book, the Musée Imaginaire (published in French in 1947): the imaginary museum or museum without walls.

His global travels as an attaché had made Malraux conscious of the importance of cultural understanding through visibility, and with that, the problems of containing heterogenous materials in the permanent museum exhibition. Malraux's considerations were in some sense logistically motivated: the hazards of exporting precious objects to precarious locations. But in fact his concerns were more conceptual: the almost impossible task of faithful contextualisation and curatorial mediation of different cultures.

I say almost impossible, because Malraux did make an attempt. The Musée Imaginaire is a monochrome compendium of documentation images of one artwork or artefact after another – accompanied by brief contextualising captions and Malraux's own diplomatic justification in terms of selection and sequencing.

You can sense the overwhelming nature of his task. The use of reproductions as the primary materials in Malraux's museum challenges the primacy given to the "authenticity" of objects in such contexts, as well as that of the context itself. We the readers know that what we see is cropped from its site of production, mediated by a particular ordering, dated by an idiosyncratic chronology, and removed from its original material status, inextricable from its new collective representation. The real object we have is the book as exhibition: a scaled-down survey of global proportions.



2. *André Malraux editing Museum Without Walls, 1947.*



3. *Exploded view, Kennedy Space Centre hanger. Crash investigators with debris of Space Shuttle Columbia, 2003.*

University of Cape Town

4a. *Cover of Temporary and Travelling Exhibitions, Museums and Monuments – X series, 2nd Ed. UNESCO: Dusseldorf, 1963.*

museums and monuments - x

temporary and travelling exhibitions

069

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28a

28a, 28b, 28c, 28d. (a) (b) (c) A travelling exhibition prepared by the German Health Museum of Cologne. All the units were designed to fit into a small van and to be set up in schoolrooms, gymnasiums, and similar locations. The basic unit is a simple metal tubular system which is clamped and screwed together.

28b



4b.

4b,c. 'The Principles of Packing' from Temporary and Traveling Exhibitions, UNESCO: Dusseldorf, 1963.

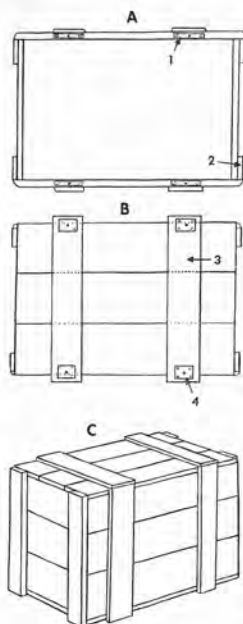


Fig. 15. Typical box construction.

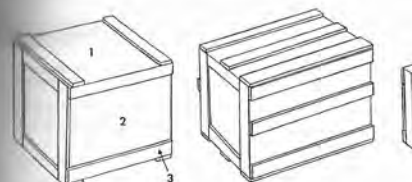


Fig. 16. Three types of plywood cases with reinforcing battens of heavier lumber.

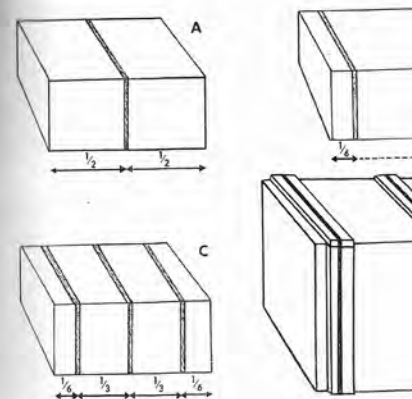


Fig. 17. Methods of applying metal straps.



J. C. Smuts looking at some of the Abe Bailey bequest collection of paintings at the African National Gallery yesterday when he officially opened the exhibition of the painting on the left is of the Rt. Hon. Lord Milner by Sir William Orpen.

reused
a Commission
Cape Times Correspondent.
Worcester, Tuesday.—Mr. C. J. Steynberg, noted African sculptor, has been awarded a commission to carve a equestrian statue in the grounds of the Union Buildings, Pretoria, of the late Prime Minister, Mr. J. B. M. Hertzog. The statue is to be placed at the entrance to the grounds, and will be the work of the sculptor, who is now working on the outside of the monument.
Mr. Steynberg said that Mr. Hertzog, who was requested to model the statue, had asked him to model the four horses of the monument, and that he would be pleased to do so. He said that he was not sure if the statue would be placed at the entrance to the grounds, but that he was sure it would be a great honor to him.
Mr. Steynberg's reply was that he could not agree to such an arrangement, as it would be a great honor to him to be asked to carve a statue of the late Prime Minister, but that he was not sure if the statue would be placed at the entrance to the grounds, but that he was sure it would be a great honor to him.

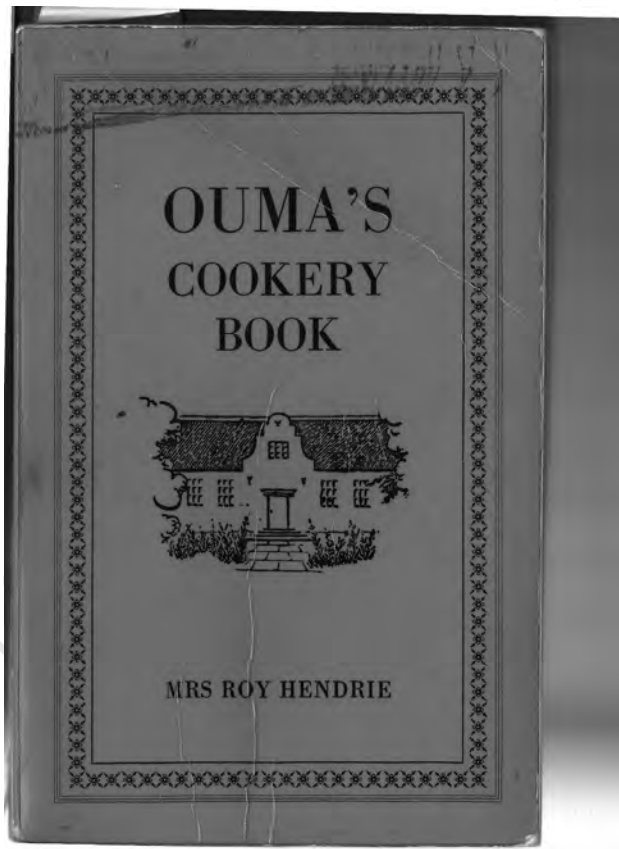
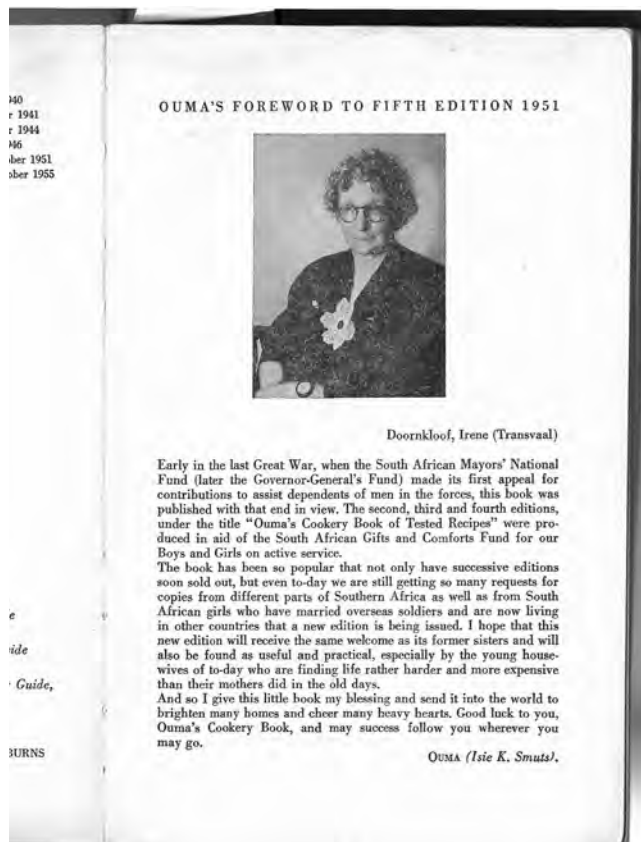
Cape Times
THURSDAY, MARCH 6, 1947.
Art in S.A.
They were fortunate people who were present yesterday morning when General Smuts opened the Bailey collection of pictures which, in the terms of Sir Abe Bailey's will, he presented to the National Gallery. They are pictures in the collection of which Sir Abe took a great personal pride. He made no pretence to be a man of great discrimination in art. He was, as General Smuts said, a son of the soil, and a man who had had few opportunities in life for normal education. None the less, he had a discriminating judgment and the collection which has now been added to South African art collections is by no means the least important of them all. It contains some great portraits and it includes a large number of paintings by the leading artists of England, who are interested in sport, and more particularly in the sport in which Sir Abe Bailey was most deeply interested, the turf.
General Smuts' speech in declaring the collection open to the public must rank among his most outstanding utterances. It was right off the beaten track. His beautiful and almost inspired words on the eerie loveliness of South Africa and the opportunities which its manifold and wonderful charm offers the artist of the future must be an inspiration which will be cherished for long years to come. General Smuts' speech, to which, owing to space restrictions, it is impossible for the newspapers to do full justice, may be compared, for its humour and its appeal to all that is best in South African life, to that immortal speech which he delivered, now many years ago, at Maclear's Beacon on the summit of Table Mountain. His words on both those great occasions surely abide as rich memories in the ears of all who heard them.

FIRST EDITION	Pretoria, March 1!
SECOND EDITION	Pretoria, November
THIRD EDITION	Pretoria, November
FOURTH EDITION	Pretoria, March 1!
FIFTH EDITION	Bloufontein, Oct
SIXTH EDITION	Johannesburg, Oct

*O Thou Who kindly dost provid
For every creature's want,
We bless Thee, God of nature u
For all Thy goodness lent;
And if it please Thee, Heavenly
May never worse be sent,
But whether granted or denied,
Lord bless us with content.*

5a,b,c,d,e,f,g,h,i,j. Appearing in six editions throughout the 1940s and '50s Ouma's *Cookery Book of Tested Recipes*, published by Ouma ("grandma" as she like to be called) Smuts, wife of the then prime minister of the Union Jan Smuts, presented a melange of "national" recipes submitted by women across the Union from a number of culinary traditions and cultural backgrounds. The books were sold to support the South African troops fighting in the Second World War.

From *Tomato Bredde*, *Biltong*, *Blatjang*, etc., the "tested recipes" use "government-issued sugar" and incorporate practical tips for taking economical shortcuts to still "keep up" certain domestic standards during hard times.



Over the course of 6 months, I held a number of lunches in my studio and elsewhere based on Ouma's "tested" recipes, to which I invited guests who might 'bless me with content' as Burns prays for in the opening pages of Ouma's cookbook. In attendance were my colleagues at the Centre for Curating the Archive and Michaelis School of Fine Art, visiting curators, and practitioners whose work could inform the topic specifically or obliquely.

These practitioners included artist and researcher Kathryn Smith, art historian and curator, Michael Godby, curator of the Iziko Michaelis Collection, Hayden Proud, and sociologist in transcultural studies, Sandra Boerngen. The lunches were documented using audio recording, photography, a written report and of course, leftovers.

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MAY 1944

The tea-party given by the trustees of the Michaelis Gallery for Lady Michaelis and her son and daughter-in-law yesterday was a cheery occasion. Here are (left to right) the Mayoress, Mrs. H. E. Gearing, Lady Michaelis, and Mrs. J. Carinus, wife of the Administrator of the Cape, with the Administrator and the Mayor in the background.



Miss Ruth Proutie, Keeper of the Michaelis Gallery, pours tea for Mr. Cecil M. Michaelis at the party given by the trustees yesterday. Capt. M. Green and Mrs. Graham Botha

Art Gallery May Get £2,000 Grant

Cape Times Correspondent.
STELLENBOSCH.—A report by the chairman of the committee of the proposed Art Gallery at Grosvenor House, presented at the last meeting of the Stellenbosch Town Council, stated that the Minister of Education had informed him that the Government was putting £2,000 for the gallery on the next estimates.
This money would be voted in connection with Adult Education, and would be earmarked for Stellenbosch.
The committee recommended that the deed of donation should become the owner of the pictures and be responsible for the financial arrangements, and that all final decisions rest with it.
While the committee would have no objection to the creation of a committee of trustees, it must insist that such a committee should include at least three councillors.

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*I guessed my pepper, my soup was too hot.
I guessed my water, it dried in the pot.
I guessed my salt, and what do you think?
For the rest of the day we did nothing but drink.
I guessed my sugar, my sauce was too sweet,
And thus by guessing I spoilt our treat.
So now I guess nothing, for cooking by guesses
Will ruin all skill and produce only messes.*

From an Old Cookery Book

(quoted in Ouma's Cookery Book of Tested Recipes, 1st ed. 1940)

OUMA LUNCH No. ONE:

*May 6th 2011, Studio,
Old Medical Building, Michaelis*

Menu

*Starter: Melon slices and parsley
Main: Crème of Spinach Soup
with nutloaf
Dessert: Economical cake*

Guests

*CCA colleagues: Joanne Bloch,
Jessica Brown, Niek de Greef,
Brenton Maart, Andrew Putter
(George Mahashe present for
first part)*

Meal

Today, we made a “meal” of the mid-term joint-exhibition of our ongoing individual research projects scheduled for February, 2012. Not only an ideal opportunity for us to present our research-in-process without the pressure of displaying a “finished product”; the exhibition could also function as a structure within which to work through a number of issues surrounding the “curatorial” component of that research. Much broader than the act of display, of course, the curatorial refers to an entire series of decisions, selections and framings – it is not only the “what” but also the “how?” and the “why?” pertaining to any body of knowledge. To this end, these topics provided an apt initial discussion for the Ouma Lunches – which, I hope, as an idea/framing device, helped set the conversation in motion from various angles rather than following a rigid content-to-display trajectory.

We discussed the possibility of various forms of display, the media, mediation strategies and temporal elements that might be most appropriate – interactive iPads to track visual histories and associations for photographic archives; a one night event in which we could condense a series of discussions, actions and displays to create one critical moment; a long term, “standard exhibition length” show that might reflect more accurately the time and silence of archival work; as well as the level of didacticism necessary within an “academic context” versus the aestheticism of each component of the show in an artistic sense.

One useful text which I suggested to the group was written in relation to a project by artist and educator (for want of a better phrase) Anton Vidokle (founder of e-flux) – entitled Exhibition as School. The project focused on the mechanics of production, documentation and mediation – asking: how is it that we exhibit concrete social forms (such as shared histories, existing archives etc) and if every documentation is in fact a new production, what does that make ‘the archive’?

In the as-yet unpublished catalogue for the project, there is recorded an email exchange between a number of creative thinkers involved in the exhibition. One writer states:

Generally speaking, there seems to be an awkward adjustment that takes place in the passage of the work from a more domestic context (while it's ongoing), to an exhibition context where a certain didacticism and theatricality is practiced – as Anton said to have happened in Knoxville – and where an unknowable, larger public is inferred, all of a sudden.

Maybe this is a field where there is a potential to develop a kind of meta-documentation, that is a product and archiving of a work; that at the same time is already a new generative process that breaks the finite cycles of production and documentation, as well as rethinking the modes for its presentation.

Taking this into serious consideration would indeed transform the nature of both our processual and “final” presentation of research. At the most basic level, we came to a collective understanding of the generative and non-neutral nature of curatorial actions. We look forward to building onto this a sophisticated architecture of both concept and methodology for the months ahead as we continue to meet – finding ways of working independently/ collaboratively, making our research public in the best possible way, and in the best possible way together.

5f. *Ouma Lunch No. One*
(image by Andrew Putter).



OUMA LUNCH No. TWO:

*August 12th 2011, Studio,
Old Medical Building, Michaelis*

Menu

Starter: Tomato and Bean Salad

Main: Green (not green!) Mielie

*Chowder with toasted leftover
poppy-seed bread*

*Dessert: Small or large
chocolate tarts with marmalade,
or carrot cake from Jessica
(family recipe)*

*Beverage: Warwick First Lady,
Cab-Sav.*

Guests

*CCA colleagues: Jessica Brown,
Andrew Putter, George Mahashe,
and new addition to CCA, Jon
Whidden*

*Other ingredients (some thoughts and comments shared in
the interim):*

From: Clare Butcher

Subject: re: meeting about the exhibition next week

Date: June 1, 2011 11:28:45 AM GMT+02:00

To: George Mahashe, Andrew Putter, brenton mart,
Joanne Bloch, Jessica Brown, Niek de Greef, carolyn.
hamilton, Pippa Skotnes

Hello A Team!

Just wanted to touch base with you about exhibition plans
before we scatter at the end of semester...What I'd like
to hear is if anyone has had major epiphanies, changes
in direction, ideas for collective action, strategies etc.
Basically, bring something you'd like to talk about and I'll
do the same. Attached for your interest is a wonderful text
by Pad.ma: an South Asian video archive platform who
are pretty dynamic and have some incredible insights into
preemptive archival interventions (<http://pad.ma/about/>)!

Best wishes

C

From: Clare Butcher

Subject: re: Follow up on next year's exhibition - some
thoughts to mull over

Date: June 21, 2011 9:46:16 AM GMT+02:00

Dearest colleagues,

After a good chat with Andrew last week he urged me
to send along some of my thoughts to our group just to
perhaps start a bit more of a directed conversation around
the exhibition. The conversation also followed a good
meeting with Nadja at the gallery - where she informed me
what equipment and other support she can offer us. It's a
nice space, and there are many possibilities. Which brings
me, I suppose to some of the following points:

One (sort of) point:

The space is very beautiful, and...rustic.
Particularly the wooden floors and ceiling of the "upper
room" make for a potentially antiquated atmosphere. This
resonates of course with the propensity for beautifying the
work of the archive. It's so easy to slip into a nostalgic

aesthetic when resurrecting the bones, casting light on the dust, spectacularising the ruins, further cluttering the existing material profusion etc. I know this is not always our objective, but often this happens unwittingly because it seems to be something of a default position. Perhaps one could say this was a code for archive, like in film language where you can rely on certain tropes to communicate a particular meaning in the fastest, neatest way as possible so as not to break the spell of the filmic world.

For our exhibition, I want us to think about ways of showing our process which streamline and almost essentialise the tropes of the archive. How can we bring all these vectors of meaning to their most basic forms which still maintain a context, a story, still acknowledge themselves as archive; but in doing so, reflect on those tropes and the world being created through our presentations. A nice phrase from our Isabel Hofmeyer reading a few weeks ago is 'methodological fetishism' which she uses to differentiate between the study of a thing itself and the study of the ways of studying it. How can we make a fetish of our own methodology in a way that allows us to then play with and change the nature of encounters with the investigation, production and documentation of bodies of knowledge.

I just saw some great exhibitions at the Reina Sofia of their permanent collection and how they've used both a heavy architectural space as well as, obviously, quite a laden collection. Really refreshing and simply-themed rooms. Around the Guernica you could almost measure the "aura" to 5.5m radius - though there was nothing stopping people coming any closer, the work just seems to have this presence....kind of nice to play with those strange spaces of encounter....which brings me to my next point.

Another (sort of) point:

About that world and those encounters that we are seeking to build. Let's make this an experiment in punctuating our projects using different levels or forms of encounter. How can we manipulate the invisible time and space around and through the displays which make for intimate, collective, private, public, slow, quick, painstaking, almost effortless, surprise, determined.

Isabel Hofmeyer. 2007. 'The Black Atlantic Meets the Indian Ocean: Forging New Paradigms of Transnationalism for the Global South.' In SOCIAL DYNAMICS 33.2: 3- 32.

*See youtube interview
with Hanru: [http://
www.youtube.com/
watch?v=04VwUELaR3k](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=04VwUELaR3k)*

I just saw a great exhibition as part of Spain's Photo-España (2011) festival which Hou Hanru curated (entitled *The Power of Doubt* or 'El Poder de la Duda') where he really just challenged the validity of 'photo festival' in a productive sense - turning to look at artists that were already considering the positive possibility of photography as a medium amongst many which fictionalises, sensationalises, beautifies. The exhibition really just presented artistic doubts in various contexts (often quite politically/historically fraught) from which these artists are working. There was a great routing system through the exhibition and at one point you were confronted with a whole wall of mirrors which expanded the space, reflected some of the works doubly and also made you a part of the exhibition composition. It was such a beautiful, elegant way of integrating the concerns of the show into a structural non-work. The simple solutions (as in this case, the mirror wall was just a part of the room I believe) are often the best. And that's what I'd like this show to be - simple, strong encounters with our processes which are not finished, but invite another public, other publics, to become part of them for a time. Encounters which then refract, refocus, make anew, the projects we've already started.

Enough rambling from me. Just some thoughts to keep us going.

All my best

C

Meal

While slurping up soup, we welcomed new-comer to the CCA, Jon Whidden, while reigniting some ideas concerning our mid-term joint-exhibition at the Michaelis Gallery in February, 2012. Many were able to share concrete forms and concepts they would like to develop – the use of video, timelaps, contact sheets and other technical devices – ways of activating the various archives we are constructing and framing, which we had been mulling over in the weeks since our last meeting.

Andrew referred to the Pad.ma '10 Theses on the Archive' once again, and asked how we might construct and present a set of varying positions, or declarative statements on the archive in the way that we exhibit our works – ways which ask how curatorial strategies might act otherwise. I suggested that we might look back on the discussion held in the most recent Archival Platform workshop (July 27-29) in which, through our own written submissions, we had already presented a number of positions such as the curator as “trickster”, as “lover”, as “sympathiser”, as “bureaucrat”. Perhaps we could use these as both jumping off points as well as framing devices – the trickster for example, said George, could disturb images, or traffic them illicitly, making them “jump”. And by framing I imagined that we could also consider a series of texts surrounding the exhibition which act as micro-theses from each of us, or rather hypotheses, in which we present our positions as different curatorial role-players on a more general level, not only in relation to the immediate content and context. Andrew suggested we even use a typographic language to couch this, in which we present these projects as exercises and by doing so, look on the archive with ‘fresh eyes’, or ‘sabbath eyes’ *as used by Jan Verwoert, quoting Adorno in his ‘On Future Histories. And the Generational Contract with the No Longer and Not Yet Living and the Pan-Demonium of Irreverent Styles of Nostalgia’ (2008).

By discussing the idea of publications and other practicalities in relation to the length and timeframe of the exhibition, we realised that in fact there are multiple temporalities to an event of the type that is an archival exhibition. And in subsequent reading I came across a well-constructed explanation of how these event temporalities

work in the writing of Maurice Roche in *Mega-events and Modernity: Olympics and Expos in the Growth of Global Culture* (2000). Here, Roche outlines what I would call the “rings” of time surrounding any complex event or complex of events – involving ‘important elements of “official” public culture’ (Roche 2000:8) and I am sure, unofficial by default. These events, because of their transitory uniqueness (i.e. they happen once, for a short time and compress a number of spaces and times into themselves in terms of the history and culture they display), are multi-dimensional: they contain conflicting elements of the modern/non-modern, national/international, local/non-local, urban/mediated. No matter how located a complex event of the kind that he defines as ‘mega-events’, it will always be mediated and circulated just as the objects on display in an expo have been brought together from other locations. How does this then effect the embodiment and immediacy of the event? As well as the levels of participation and spectatorship?

Roche’s book is attempting to model a kind of sociology of events, to come to terms with their ‘pervasive presence’. To do this, he introduces the need for a multi-dimensional methodology in the apprehension of these multi-dimensional constructions. This multi-dimensional method is founded on the multiple temporalities which the event inhabits. Roche identifies these temporalities as: the event core (the immediate past, present and outcomes of the event itself); the medium term time which leads up to and out of that immediate setting (the ‘pre-event’ and the ‘post-event’); and finally the event horizon, the point to which the long-term motivations building up to, and effects resulting from the event, expand – what structural changes came about and how might we periodise the event in history etc. These differences in time basically separate the ‘lived and long-term’ experiences of an event – the dramatic and the dramaturlogical in other words.

To exhibit any archive we must constantly allow these dimensions to reflect and refract each other: the dramatic capacity of the material and the event of exposing them in an arrangement (exhibition) and the dramaturgy of that arrangement in terms of the material’s future life as well as the practices of exhibiting such materials.

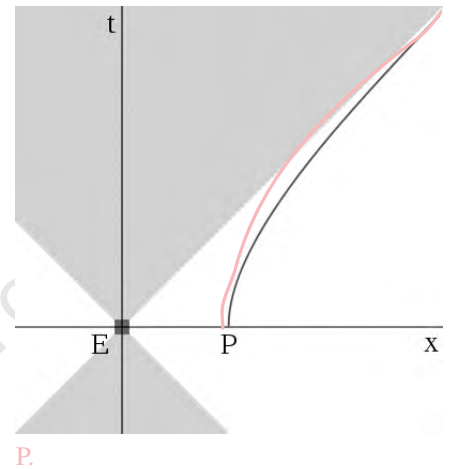
Event horizons, after some Googling, present themselves as mostly relating to black holes in space. Meaning Space, with a capital S. An easy Wiki search tells us that

In general relativity, an event horizon is a boundary in spacetime beyond which events cannot affect an outside observer. In layman's terms it is defined as "the point of no return" i.e. the point at which the gravitational pull becomes so great as to make escape impossible. The most common case of an event horizon is that surrounding a black hole. Light emitted from beyond the horizon can never reach the observer. Likewise, any object approaching the horizon from the observer's side appears to slow down and never quite pass through the horizon, with its image becoming more and more redshifted as time elapses. The traveling object, however, experiences no strange effects and does, in fact, pass through the horizon in a finite amount of proper time.

[see P diagram]

As an aside (but never completely unrelated) you have got to listen to this Radiolab documentary on various kinds of 'Falling' (<http://www.radiolab.org/2010/sep/20/>) the end captures a comedian, Neil deGrasse Tyson, relating the sensation of the one-way fall into a black hole – a somewhat more accessible, layman's version of the above description.

While trying to avoid complete disintegration – this exhibition, I suppose, would aim to allow those co-habitances between rational and irrational experiences of time and place, falling in love with the fragmented forms our stories take, and allowing ourselves to be carried away to the horizon between hypothesis and thesis. Where forms become redshifted and images reach our eyes more slowly.



OUMA LUNCH No. THREE:

*August 23rd 2011, Studio,
Old Medical Building, Michaelis*

Menu

*Old fashioned milk tart -
crustless (Mrs. Murray)
Cheese scones (with cream
and jam – optional) (J.H.)
Maids of honour (A.Paxton)
Koeksisters (a gift from Jessica
Brown)
Beverages:
Bridesmaid's hope (W.C.T.U.)
Coffee
Ceylon tea*

Guests

*Kathryn Smith, Christian Nerf,
Michael Chandler, Kabelo
Malatsie, Phillip Johnson, Gabi
Alberts, Darren van der Merwe,
George Mahashe, Andrew Putter,
Jessica Brown.*

Music

*Bing Crosby and Friends – a
compilation from the late 1940s
(brought by Kathryn)*

Setting

To connect the tea discussion directly with my research around the British Council-initiated *Exhibition of Contemporary British Paintings and Drawings* of '47 and '48 which toured all around the Union, a number of enlarged, black and white photocopies of the artworks shown and press clippings from South African newspapers at the time, were displayed in the studio. Beginning with the tenuous temporal and spatial link of Johannesburg in 1948, I wished to draw attention to other similarities between the material social inscriptions and gender politics at work in "Bubbles" Schroeder's murder case (Kathryn Smith's research topic) and the British exhibition. Additionally, I felt that Kathryn Smith's working method would be of particular relevance to my project as well as many of my colleagues currently building or reconstituting certain 'open' archives from within recent South African history. Open in the sense that they were never 'closed cases', and Kathryn's forensic approach specialises in picking apart the inconsistencies, gaps and overlaps within the narratives she chooses to work with. How to resolve these elements as artistic projects which operate within a socio-historical vein, is a key concern of not only my, but our work in the Centre for Curating the Archive.

In our email correspondence prior to the Ouma Tea, I'd mentioned the notable presence of paintings (on the British exhibition) which would fall into the 'Interior-with-girl' category. These dark and often quite sombre scenes include those by Gwen John and Ethel Walker, *Girl Reading* and *Portrait of a Girl with Dark Hair* (respectively), Walter Sickert's *The Mantelpiece*, and Ben Nicolson's *Portrait of the Artist's Wife*.

Gwen John and Ethel Walker were indeed part of the contemporary London "scene" represented prominently by the show. Despite having both studied at the Slade school of art and under such prominent painters as Whistler and Sickert, respectively, John and Walker were however two of only three women represented on the exhibition. Granted, Gwen John had seven works in the show, but these seemed to have garnered less attention by South African audiences than those works of her brother Augustus whose sell-out solo show in London is mentioned in the Cape Times on

the 12th of May, 1948 (while the exhibition would have been [based on a report of mishandling of artwork made to the British Council] in Pietermaritzburg). Gwen John was described by John Rothenstein (one of the British Council exhibition selection committee) in Volume One of his *Modern English Painters* three-volume artist history, as more ‘methodical’ than her brother, and despite studying under Whistler, she was someone who ‘stole through life and out of it almost unnoticed,’ as an individual who was ‘chaste, subdued and sad.’ – what a contrast with the case of “Bubbles” Schroeder!

This article on Augustus John was displayed in the studio alongside selected excerpts from the Cape Times and Cape Argus newspapers (found in the South African National Gallery archives) depicting the female figures present within the South African contemporary art circles – Frieda Locke, Irma Stern, Ruth Prowse and others (who might only have been mentioned because of their fashionable corduroy at an opening of the New Group for instance). Be that as it may, it is interesting to note the South African female presence in the administration and mediation of the British exhibition (though lunch-time lectures etc) on the one hand, and their role in the selection of work for the subsequent South African exhibition of 1948 (albeit a small one) as well as the number of female artists in that exhibition (12 artists and sculptor, Elza Dziomba).

Tea

As usual we spent the first five minutes of the session discussing what was actually on the table. Pastries with almond and marmalade, scones with whipped cream, etc. And of course whether or not one should bake crustless milktart?

I then introduced the guests around the table, and why this topic might be of interest for them, as well as providing a description of the Ouma Lunch/tea concept itself. I outlined why Kathryn Smith and I had chosen to make a tea based on the “unholy alliance” of two events: one being the British Council’s Exhibition of Contemporary British Art which toured South Africa from 1947-8 and the other being, the murder of “Bubbles” Schroeder in Johannesburg in 1948. As seen in Kathryn Smith’s

approach to the latter, these topics require a strategy of immersion into the social and cultural politics of the time as well as a great deal of speculation and investigation with the lack of comprehensive or consistent archives.

Kathryn's words towards the end of the session seem to sum up this motivation – of why we should look into history from the position of idiosyncratic detective:

This story is a lens to understand the social milieu...and all the cultural products that the story has generated – myth, film, letters from the public – all of this stuff is really the interesting part about it. We're never going to actually reconstruct the event itself – the event is gone – but to quote Michael Ward, he says:

“All societies inscribe their secrets and apparent natures on the objects of their material existence. The variety of acts of inscription is overwhelming in quantity and in kind. Some kinds of inscription are more formal and intentional than others. The more formal, the more susceptible to distortions and encoding. The more intentional, the more perhaps they lie. But these conceptions of formality and intentionality conceal and eagerness to surrender certain kinds of truths if they are approached with the right degree of cunning.”

With such a murky lens of a story, Kathryn was faced with the problem of what form it should take. Should it be a social history? How does one deal with the visual material? And what of Michael Ward's social milieu – as reflected by the press, the level of consent with readers and the contractual nature, according to Ward, between readers and writers around the truth: the repression of facts for the good of social cohesion amongst a white population – this is complex stuff! Kathryn advocated that we look for the absences via a “history of efforts” to reinscribe certain versions of the story within public discourse. How can we move away from binaries of whodunnit? Rather look for the players and points of correlation.

Tracing these players and points of correlation has indeed required a degree of cunning in Kathryn's research over the last years. She began with discussing the "problems" or rather creative differences arriving in the form of "heresay" and anachronistic euphemisms running throughout witness and press reports after the mysterious murder of young "glamour girl" "Bubbles" Schroeder in 1948. The subsequent 'cultural products' of film and paperback fiction have designated the lower class German-South African 18 year-old girl's story as something similar to that of the American 'Black Dahlia' case. These cultural inscriptions over "Bubbles's" death and of course, the inconsistencies between versions of the actual story keep us, said Kathryn, from ever being able to claim the act of fully reconstructing events of the time. The tremendous overwriting of the supposed perpetrator boys never actually charged and the total lack of imaging of "Bubbles" herself as an actual victim, opens up the space for an artist to work. The only possible reconstruction is a dramatic one.

Setting that reconstruction in motion, Kathryn's presentation was particularly visual, including: maps tracing Bubbles's final walk from a party late one night down Oxford Road on what had been the edge of Johannesburg; newspaper articles, soft-hued black-and-white portraits, crime-scene shots (in Bird Haven where Bubbles was found handbagless, with clean stockinged feet), book covers and magazine features; of course the bureaucratic paper trail in police archives is the bulk remainder of Bubbles's material inscription (as well as non-accessioned files discovered by Kathryn in the course of her research). Kathryn used these images to track the varied and mingling lines making up the unweildy history of that fateful night-drive, as well as the subsequent "hushing up" activities by the boys' well-connected families.

Kathryn detailed her quest, step by step in the perfect continuous tense of a real detective novel – steps which included conversations with a writer who'd contacted Bubbles's spirit through a medium, and contracting a freelance researcher who scoured the police and court archives looking for a postmortem and court transcript. None of what they find, down to the very material qualities of the letters, the natural bleaching which had occurred on



5f. *Lunch with Kathryn Smith and guests in August, 2011 (image by Kathryn Smith).*

the pages of those official files, is lost on Kathryn. Bringing us to the present, Kathryn finished her presentation with images of the current development around the crime site – Bird Haven – and the state of Bubbles’s gravestone. Kathryn had found one of the accused, now all grown up *old, and had also identified a doctor who had known Bubbles. Her fantasy, she said, was to put these two characters, standing them as real people, into conversation with one another. But ‘I am questioning the form of art as we know it – in relation to the form that this project should take. These images fit into another system of information...’

Andrew Putter made a valuable interjection, saying that Kathryn’s ability to make images, and understanding of their reception as well as overall knowledge of scenography etc, means that Kathryn is capable of producing something that has the intensity of artworks but that sit in a space that is not art. ‘That aren’t accused of being art,’ suggested Chris Nerf. ‘Yes, but they’re not something else,’ replied Andrew, ‘they have their own identity in relation to the context of this project – the spaces, how they’re shown. The starting point is asking who is your audience? What are those actual bodies, those human bodies that encounter this story? What are those subjectivities? And once you ask those questions, you’ll develop a logic for where those bodies might find these stories. And then you can begin to think about scale and form etc.’ Kathryn then related her decisions about captioning in particular projects, and the reticence to label or classify images because of the kinds of default/fragmentory effects this might have on a viewer. How do we conjure a holistic environment? Perhaps it’s in developing visual rather than textual codes. Also, how do we avoid the nostalgia and romance of the grainy newspaper image from that so typically “Noir” period in 20th century history?

‘It’s about turning it,’ said Kathryn, while still finding a way to rely on that ‘aesthetic base’ as Andrew called it. How could we play upon visual registers and the presumptions they bring – letting the viewer engage in some of that dramatic reconstruction and thus, continuing that ‘history of efforts’ with ‘the right degree of cunning’?

OUMA LUNCH No. FOUR:

August 26th 2011, Studio,
Old Medical Building, Michaelis

Menu

Main: Yellow rice with dates
(Mrs. Beyers, M.J. Davidtsz)
Bobotie – vegetarian version
(Mrs. R.C. Harris)
toppings, coconut, raisins and
Mrs. Balls' peach chutney
Dessert: Bakewell Tart
(From Lincoln)
Beverages:
Spier Shiraz
Coffee
Black Russian Tea

Guests

Professor Michael Godby,
Anthea Buys, Natasha Norman,
Jon Whidden, George Mahashe,
Athi-Patra Ruga and a visiting
curator from the Palazzo Bembo,
Venice.

*Ref. Julian Carman. 2006. Uplifting the
Colonial Philistine: Florence Philips
and the Making of the Johannesburg Art
Gallery (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand
University Press).*

Setting

Professor Michael Godby, currently the head of Art Historical Studies at the University of Cape Town, also curated two comprehensive exhibitions mapping the trajectories of still life and landscape traditions in South Africa (Is There Still Life?, 2007; and The Lie of the Land, 2010). These research projects as well as his extensive knowledge of South African photographic history (and of course many other facets of his knowledge as an active member of the South African arts community) made for incredibly nuanced insights into the history of the Exhibitions of Contemporary British and South African (1947-48). Prior to the session I had sent Michael scans of the exhibition catalogues as well as a number of the memos and more "archival material" I had come across in my research at the Tate Archive, the British Council and in the South African National Gallery's press files.

We began the conversation around the general observations of landscape and still life painting in South Africa today.

Meal

"Exhibitions are always contentious" – Michael Godby

Art has often been used as a kind of binding agent. Even from the time of Lady Phillips and the development of the Johannesburg Art Gallery in the 1910s, art performed a diplomatic function. Art collections functioned, in one sense, geographically to cement the relationship between the 'metropole' and South Africa (Union Government), and in terms of power relationships within South Africa between Afrikaans and Anglophone society.

To a large extent, the exhibition by the British Council in '47-48 can be seen as a reaching out to South Africa by Britain – a 'thank you' for its help in the War. In 1947 there had been a royal visit to South Africa and this, Michael thinks, is actually a more important factor in the event of this exhibition than to read it according to the moment which proceeded it: the fall of the Union government and the start of apartheid. The latter was a dire moment for the country but not necessarily for art (that was only visible later).

Amateurism and the modern artist as professional

As far as the chronology of South African Art is concerned, said Michael, the years 1947-9 were important because they mark a shift in the cultural authority of a number of artistic groups. In 1902 the South African Society of Artists had been formed and when the New Group emerged in 1938, followed by the South African Association of Art (1945), a definite generational and conceptual friction resulted. The internationalist nature of the later groups is evidenced by the fact that the SAAA were the ones to manage these exhibitions of contemporary art with Britain, and the presence of New Group artists on the South African show is significant.



5g. Studio exhibition of reproductions for Ouma Lunch No. Four.

‘The Society of Artists was still alive and well,’ said Michael, ‘so what happened?’ The distinct difference between the groups was their quality control. The Society had up to that point, welcomed ‘everyone’ to their exhibitions and maintained this practice against the banner of professionalism being touted by the SAAA and New Group. ‘How do you define a professional artist?’ asked Jon Whidden. ‘Quality,’ Michael responded.

To elaborate, Michael quoted a text by Bertram Dumbleton in response to a criticism of the Society’s placing ‘vapid’ or ‘immature’ works on the walls of public galleries – this, the critic thought, had therefore become representative of contemporary art in South Africa. Dumbleton describes the Society’s intention as ‘trying to extend a hand to a number of interesting amateurs who would otherwise be isolated from artistic intercourse, which is why many bad pictures are hung in exhibitions.’ When he visited in April 1948 in preparation for the South African show at the Tate Gallery, John Rothenstein’s call for quality in contemporary art from the nation fell on futile ground according to Michael – at least in one camp.

In the memorandum from a meeting of the selection committee for the South African Exhibition (which coincided with Rothenstein’s visit), we discover that, having begun as an invitation-only process of selection, where artists were asked to submit work for discussion, the policy had then modulated to an open call strategy, open to submissions from artists across the

country. This meant that the number and varied quality of works proposed for the South African Exhibition took on monstrous proportions. Enter Rothenstein (Tate director = taste-maker + ‘art expert’) called in by the South African selection committee as a guide in the selection process.

Shuffling through his various papers and notes, Michael referred to a particular point in the memorandum where Rothenstein stated his interest in a smaller scale show of the ‘best works by the best South African artists.’ The “best” is of course often defined by exclusion – and in this case it was students and amateurs were out. This was not only the result of spatial limitations (the Tate Gallery would see to it that ‘the size of the exhibition was commensurate with the amount of talent available’). As Michael commented, this move and subsequent guidance provided by Rothenstein, mark the Tate director’s distinct ambition to exhibit a “modern” South African aesthetic – non-derivative and non-amateurish.

School of “Contemporary” Art – from National to International

The national, representational nature of the exhibition was unavoidable, but perhaps it was the nationalistic or nostalgic tendencies which Rothenstein sought to address. In the same meeting memo from April, 1948, Rothenstein expressed his alarm at the use of the term “national” in regard to the South Africa exhibition. In a sense, the exhibition could have functioned in establishing a South African “school” of contemporary art. In Sir Jasper Ridley’s (Chairman of the Tate Gallery Board of Trustees) foreword to the catalogue for the *Exhibition of Contemporary South African Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture*, essentialises the country’s art to ‘landscape art’, elevating its status by comparison to a British landscape tradition. Ridley’s statement that:

In subject, style and vision these paintings have already a national character of their own.

...is countered by Geoffrey Long’s introduction text in the same catalogue. Here, Long outlined the various ‘isms’ which South African artistic practice had derived from



5h. Michael Godby ‘shuffling papers’ over Mrs. Beyers’s *bobotie*.

Europe over the last 30 years (thus the “contemporary” moment), saying that, most of the country’s artists had been working in

comparative isolation and far from the rumpus of cafés and coteries. Now the country is more aware of its cultural possibilities and ponders the future. There are national movements – some good, some bad. But for those visitors who expect to see new directions of a national flavour this exhibition may be a disappointment.

The more “nostalgic tendencies” of the landscape art so representative of South Africa, could perhaps, Michael said, be perceived in the work of an older generation of artists – forming the basis for the South African Society of Artists, such as Edward Roworth. ‘Why was there no Roworth in the final selection?’ Michael asked. Also photography as a medium. Constance Stuart Larrabee for instance was nowhere in sight.

The associations between professionalism, quality and modern internationalism; and amateurism, parochiality and derivation; is also brought to bear, said Michael, in the exclusion of ‘native artists’ from the South African Exhibition, save Gerard Sekoto. Even relatively established artists such as Pemba and Bengu, who had exhibited elsewhere would have been considered amateur, said Michael, in terms of the broader “artfulness” which Rothenstein was seeking out.

Referring to an article written by Roworth in 1926, *‘Towards a National Art’* Michael cited the artist as saying – ‘Great art is the expression of the soul of the people.’ Here Roworth vouches for the importance of landscape painting in South African identity (South African life ‘broad-based upon the soil’ rather than the neurotic life of European cities). Despite this, the selection panel of the South African “contemporary” show was looking for modernity, formalism, abstraction. Not to say that the works should be derivative of a “European” modernism. This was to be outrightly avoided, according to Rothenstein in that same committee meeting of April 1948.

See Christine Boyanoski’s (2006) ‘Selective Memory: the British Empire Exhibition and national histories of art.’

Because of its beginnings, scale and eventual translation into various contexts abroad, the South African *Exhibition of Contemporary Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture*, marks a move from provincialism to a new internationalism.

We discussed what was at stake for the many players within the committee – ranging from Mr P. Theron (head of the Ministry of Education at the time), the politically active Stellenbosch professor FEJ Malherbe to established artists such as Ruth Prowse. There was a sense in which art was being heralded as more important than even political realities at the time (the ideologies around various nationalisms at the time, race relations and South Africa's position within the Empire).

Michael reminded us that this exhibition took place just five years before the official beginning of Abstract Expressionism in the United States. With that movement, artists found themselves free to comment on the so-called political realities of the day, but much less representationally. South African works which expressed a similar kind of universal appeal were promoted – abstraction was clearly encouraged in the exhibition catalogue. Abstraction's subsequent development in South African painting however, Michael suggested, hardly contained the politicality of its American counterpart – becoming bland, and not allowing itself to say anything at all under increasing political censure. Natasha Norman commented that in fact one could see abstraction as becoming a political site.

The kind of landscapes that were included in the exhibition such as that of Leroux Smith Leroux were often populated by people, romantic, with a certain tendency towards abstract patterning. In some cases, such as Coetzee, who was famous for nationalistic landscapes, was represented in the exhibition by a still life. 'Perhaps a lot of this would be familiar to us now in the context of all this "rainbow nation" conception of the new South Africa,' said Natasha, 'where depictions of the landscape play such an important part.'

[tape ends...]

OUMA LUNCH No. FIVE:

September 19th 2011, Frankfurt

Menu

Brioche (a rich yeast mixture for tea rolls, etc.) Teawreath version with hazelnut and raisins

(Miss Naude)

Beverages:

Coffee

PG Briish Tea

Guest

Sandra Boerngen (PhD, International Graduate Centre for the Study of Culture, University of Giessen)

Meal

I was put in touch with Sandra by a curator who knew of Sandra's research into the development of a "modern" South African art scene during the period between 1900 and 1948. Sandra met with me a number of times during a residency that I did with the Frankfurter Kunstverein. During our meetings she alluded to her interest in bringing the sociological work of Bourdieu into a reading of the modern art field in South Africa. I suggested that we develop on that theme as well as her research into forms of public mediation – such as the Lunch Time Lecture – which developed around modern art in South African galleries during the first half of the last century. The Bourdieu angle on the subject of public exhibitions of art, I found particularly refreshing and was able to apply some of his observations within my rationale. The 'new historicisation' mode out of which Bourdieu's work emerged in the 1970s explored concepts of convergence and institutional frameworks – in his work on *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993) Bourdieu focused on 'aesthetic value and canonicity, subjectification and structuration,' while attending to the relationship between 'the role of cultural practices' [like exhibitions] and 'the reproduction of social structures.'

38 The Field of Cultural Production

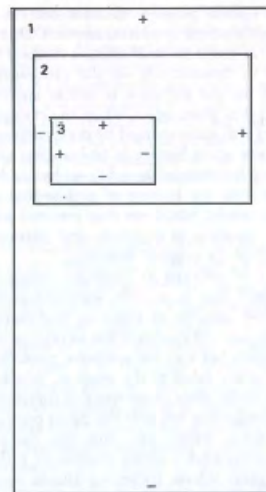


Figure 1

OUMA LUNCH No. SIX:

September 20th 2011, Frankfurt

Menu

Beetroot and onion salad

Lentil Soup (J.H.)

Dessert: German biscuits

(Mrs. G. Poole)

Beverages: Red wine

Coffee

PG Briish Tea

Guest

Visitors and colleagues at the

Frankfurt Kunstverein

Meal

As part of my residency with the Frankfurter Kunstverein I was asked to give a presentation of my current areas of interest as a curator. I opted to make a dinner using Ouma's recipes once again – but in this setting, had to aim for a broader scope if we were to address the subjects around my exhibition research. Fortunately a number of South African art practitioners were in town and able to contribute their 'insider/outsider' perspectives. Not surprisingly, the conversation around the exhibition exchange of Contemporary British and South African art from '47-'49 focused more on the difficulty of cultural translation. After having briefly described my project with the CCA, I showed the video work by Penny Siopis, *Obscure White Messenger* (2010). Even in a contemporary setting, the issues brought about by 'transnational' artistic circuits.

During my time of research in Frankfurt I had been visiting the city's Museum of World Culture and their library – which had an excellent section of literature on 'new internationalism' and 'multiculturalism' in global art being written about mostly from the 1990s onwards (ref. that early comment by Geoffrey Long in one of the previous Ouma Lunch posts regarding the various foreign 'isms' which had touched South Africa's art from the start!).

The multicultural history of art came as a response, says Jean Fisher, 'to pressure from the postcolonial world to acknowledge in some way the diverse histories and effects of modernity's vast global migration to and from centres of power and their peripheries and the consequent multiple communities of the 20th century metropolis.' Sarat Maharaj speaks of 'new internationalism' as a re-indexing of the 'scene of translations' – which would, if successful, lead to a more complex reading of the socio-political economic context, critical aesthetic practice, and the 'material expression of both individual vision and a collective experience.'

See Jean Fisher. 1994. 'Introduction.' In Jean Fisher (ed.), *Global visions towards a new internationalism in the visual arts*, (London: Iniva), x. And Ulf Hannerz. 1996. 'Introduction.' In Ulf Hannerz (ed.) *Transnational Connections: cultures, people, places*, (London: Routledge).

I chose to make the 1940s South African recipe for German Biscuits for that very reason – attempting to illustrate the physical translation of cultural elements into everyday structures. With the established discussions around internationalism and transnationalism in mind, it became apparent at my presentation in Frankfurt that neither of these areas can be addressed without looking first at 'nationalism' itself – as Elizabeth Sussman writes: 'the "national" itself has to be re-thought as an "international" site.' In the book, *Transnational Connections: cultures, people, places*, (1996) editor Ulf Hannerz reminds us that the very idea of transnationalism relies on the involvement of the State at some level – thus 'drawing attention to what it negates – that is, the continued significance of the national.' The interest of the non-uni-directional effects of various 'modernities' is one that I foresee arising from this exhibition histories project of mine. In the question of artistic process, influences and exhibitionary practice, this looking back will in fact facilitate a looking forward into a very relevant and contemporary set of issues.



5j. *Mrs G.Poole's not-so-German German Biscuits*

SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL GALLERY.

Report of the sub-committee appointed to investigate the keeping of records, the safe keeping of works of art and Mr. Inskip's work.

As Dr. Rothenstein, Director of the Tate Gallery was in Cape Town to assist with the selection of works for the Exhibition of South African Art to be sent overseas, Mr. Barlow and Mr. Boonzaier decided to ask him to advise ^{them} with regard to the keeping of catalogues and the safe keeping of works.

On Wednesday, 28th April, 1948 at 12 noon Dr. Rothenstein met Mr. Barlow, Mr. Boonzaier and the Chairman, Mr. Sibbett, in the secretary's office.

Mr. Barlow explained that following the Commission of Inquiry, the Board of Trustees had decided that the records and catalogues of works of art badly needed revision, and therefore they would be grateful for any advice Dr. Rothenstein could give them. A sample card from the catalogue giving the information which the sub-committee had decided upon at their meeting on Tuesday, 6th April was shown to Dr. Rothenstein, and also the new stock book.

Dr. Rothenstein stated that they kept the following records of their collection at the Tate Gallery:

1. PRINTED CATALOGUES.

These were sold to visitors, and by consulting the catalogue a visitor would find under each artist's name all the works in the possession of the Gallery by that artist. It was not practicable to give the exact location of every work in a printed catalogue, however, but with regard to a painting by Daubigny for instance the catalogue would indicate that his works would be found in the foreign section. The visitor could go there and see which of Daubigny's works were exhibited. Should he wish to see any others, it was a rule of the Gallery that on giving 48 hours notice a visitor should also be shown any works which were stored and which he particularly wished to see.

2. LABELS ON PICTURES AND OTHER WORKS OF ART.

All works were labelled as follows:

- (a) Stock Number.
- (b) Title.
- (c) Date of birth of artist.
- (d) Name of Artist.
- (e) Date of death of artist.
- (f) Date of presentation.
- (g) Presented by - name of Donor.

This meant that visitors who could not afford to buy catalogues were also given all the information about the different exhibits.

3. CARD INDEX.

A card index was kept mainly as a record of the location of works by the various artists. Referring to the sample

card/...

card submitted to him Dr. Rothenstein said that the method of setting out the information on the cards was quite satisfactory, but he considered it essential that the following information should also be added.

- (a) Condition of work when received.
- (b) Inscription, i.e. full particulars about signature, e.g. whether signed in full, initials, or unsigned; and also the date if this appeared on the painting, or the approximate date in square brackets.
- (c) Copyright, i.e. whether the Gallery is in possession of the copyright of the particular work.

4. COPYRIGHT.

Dr. Rothenstein explained that at the Tate Gallery they always sent a letter to artists whose works they acquired pointing out the advantages of giving the Gallery the copyright of their pictures. With regard to publications for the Gallery, such as postcard reproductions and catalogues for sale to visitors they, however, did not ask for the copyright but took it for granted that when a picture came into their possession the Gallery had the right to use it in this way.

5. STOCK BOOK.

Dr. Rothenstein stated that at the Tate Gallery a very large loose-leaf leather bound stock book was used so that a page could be devoted to each work. This was an expensive book as one volume cost about £8, but it was so essential to keep a complete history of each work in the stock book that it was worth the expenditure.

Upon examining the new stock book which was being compiled, Dr. Rothenstein stated that this was similar to the stock book which had previously been in use at the Tate Gallery, but which had been discarded as it was found that sufficient space could not be provided for the history of each work. He, however, considered that for the present it would be worth carrying on with this; then when the Trustees had decided upon and obtained a loose-leaf book this could be gradually copied from the one at present being compiled. He suggested that the Board might be able to get the loose-leaf book through the Government Printer.

6. LIBRARY.

Dr. Rothenstein stated that at the Tate Gallery they had a small reference library for the use of the staff. Although the books were listed and should be catalogued and classified, this had not been done as the library was only for their own use.

7. STORAGE BASEMENT.

Dr. Rothenstein explained that the best method of storing pictures was on sliding rails. This saved a lot of space as a number of pictures could be hung on each rail which could be pulled out when anyone wished to look at the pictures. At the end of each rail a list was put up showing which pictures would be found on it. These lists were roughly made out by one of the attendants and not by the cataloguing department. Should the Trustees wish to have these rails installed they would have

to be made to pattern and Edmonds or Sage's of London, who specialised in Museum fittings would be able to supply them.

Dr. Rothenstein added that quite small pictures were kept on shelves, similar to library shelving.

8. AIR CONDITIONING.

Mr. Boonzaier asked Dr. Rothenstein whether he considered it essential for a Gallery to be air conditioned to preserve the works of art. Dr. Rothenstein replied that he certainly thought this necessary, as pictures were very badly affected by damp. In going through the S.A. National Gallery he had noticed many pictures and especially drawings which had been affected by damp. He said that many of the drawings required urgent attention over a peroxide bath.

9. PICTURE RESTORATION.

In pointing out the dangers of allowing inexperienced people to restore pictures, Dr. Rothenstein referred to a painting he had seen in the Michaelis Gallery and which had been ruined by bad restoration. When he was in Pretoria he had discussed this subject and had suggested that it would pay the Union Government to send a promising young man to England to learn picture restoring. He should first of all spend six months at the Courtauld Institute learning to clean pictures, and should then be apprenticed for about a year to a maestro of picture restoration. He pointed out that in every country there were only two or three such maestros.

10. MUSEUM TRAINING.

Dr. Rothenstein mentioned that on a visit to Canada he had evolved a plan whereby the Tate Gallery would train young men and women from the Dominions in museum work. The idea was that they would be accepted as unpaid assistants, for not longer than six months each.

11. GENERAL.

Dr. Rothenstein kindly promised to send the Trustees a copy of the Tate Gallery's printed catalogue, a completed specimen sheet from their stock book, a completed catalogue card, and a copy of the circular letter which they sent out to artists with regard to copyright.

The Committee thanked Dr. Rothenstein for his valuable advice, and the meeting closed at 1 p.m.

6a,b,c. Memo from South African National Gallery (now known as Iziko SANG) meeting held on 28 April, 1948, during Rothenstein's return visit to the Union to assist the South African selection committee. In a way, these function as a kind of recipe that might reduce the amount of guesswork being done in South African exhibition practice and museum management at the time (and perhaps, though we wouldn't like to admit it, still today).



7a. Imperfect Librarian, Michaelis Galleries, March 2012. The work Art Expert comprised reproductions of the memo from Rothenstein's visit to the South African National Gallery in April, 1948. Each document, detailing curatorial principles of conservation, copyright and even the laying out of exhibition signage, was presented behind perspex sheets and accompanied by a correctly formatted title-card. Aspects of Rothenstein's instructions were referenced in other elements dispersed throughout the exhibition.



8.

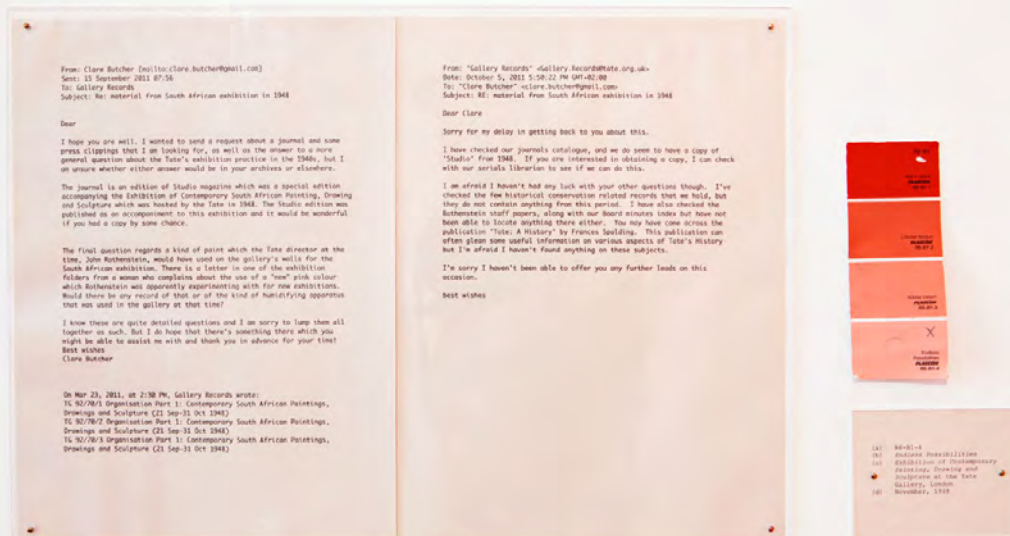
7b. Imperfect Librarian, Michaelis Galleries, March 2012. In Point 8 of the memo, Rothenstein strongly recommends the introduction of air-conditioning in the National Gallery as many of the works were already damaged by damp. 7c. An engraved, leather folder *Stock Book* containing materials from the case study of 1947-8, was presented as a final aspect of my contribution to the exhibition. Unfortunately the book was stolen during the course of the show, before it could be documented: a poetic coincidence perhaps.



9.

7d,e. Endless Possibilities, Imperfect Librarian, Michaelis Galleries, March 1912 . Below: a piece of correspondence with the Tate Gallery archivists attempting to identify the actual shade of pink. Opposite page: a wall of the gallery space was painted using Plascon R6-B1-4 'Endless Possibilities'.

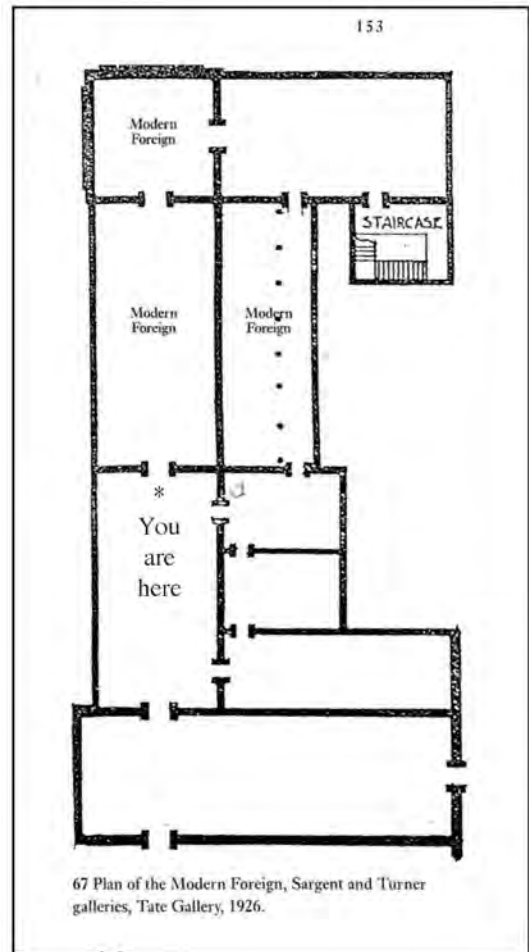
7d.



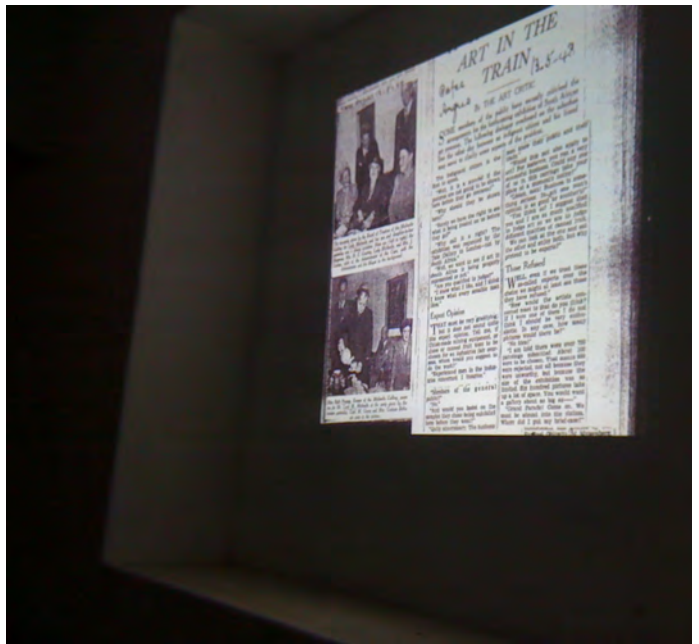
7e.



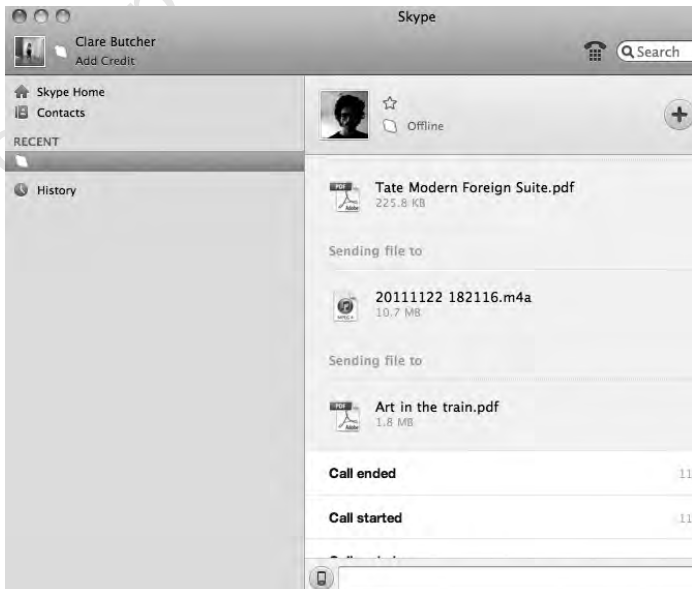
Please use the audio guide provided. Press play and follow the allocated route through the Modern Foreign Galleries.



8a,b,c,d. Mrs Pepys and the Pandemonium of the New, *Rosedale Gallery*, November 2011. A guided tour around the Exhibition of Contemporary British Paintings and Drawings was scripted based on press reportage of the *Lunch Time Talks in the South African National Gallery*. Following the routing of the Modern Foreign Wing of the Tate Gallery however, the tour enacted the travelling exhibition's collapsing of one space and time into another. The script (next page) was read by the curator for contemporary art at the National Gallery in 2011, Anthea Buys, and could be listened to as a mobile audio tour while walking through an empty gallery. At the end of the tour was a projection of The Argus Art Critic's '[A Talk About Art in the Train](#)' (13-5-48). More details on the article can be found in the Case Study section.



8b.



8c.



8d.

8e. Mrs Pepys and the Pandemonium of the New – to be read by Anthea Buys
For Clare Butcher's end of year presentation.

Mrs P: Everyone is entitled to like or dislike a painting, but that has nothing to do with its value as a work of art,

[Mrs Rhoda Pepys states from her neatly perched position in front of the small group of listeners]

The people who walk into this gallery and say, 'I don't know anything about art, but I know what I like,' are people more pleased with their own ignorance. This sort of comment says something about the person and nothing about art.

[She gestures around her to the works on the gallery's walls]

The beauty that you see in the paintings around you is impossible to define. All artists and critics throughout the centuries have been unable to define it because a person's sense of beauty is an individual preference influenced by many factors, especially fashion.

If you look over here at Graham Sutherland's expressive landscape *Cliff Road* from 1940 for instance. The washes of ink black and grey, up against yellow-red furls, and pencil-sketched lines present a modest modern affront for all of its 31.1x24.5cm dimensions.

We can trace Sutherland's influences to the Fauvist (meaning "wild-beast") movement, where many artists began to think art afresh. They looked to the work of children and savages, where there is little that is representational...it makes an impact on our vision, doesn't it? Doesn't it?

Well, we may not like it, but it is difficult to forget.

On the far wall we can see the work of John Piper, the official war artist who studied at the Slade School of Art. Though there has been some disappointment voiced by the public over the amount of work on display by younger artists; Piper's painting of the bombed House of Commons is the work of an artist who interprets the contemporary scene with the eyes of a man of the people – not a strange creature shut away in a studio. The severity of his line and tone convey a sense of permanency against a shifting sky-effect.

If you'll follow me to the next room you will see the exercises in abstraction by our very own H.E. du Plessis....[arrive in the room] He comes off very well don't you think? The choice of pictures in this show is enlightened and adventurous. Few are the works of the Royal Academicians! In the far left you see a number of pieces by those in the New English Art Club – who were the revolutionaries of the art world in Britain and aroused intense antagonism among the conservatives; it was their lot to be misunderstood and publically derided.

Another unforgettable, also quite savage scene can be found in the famous war artist, Paul Nash's *We are Making a New World*. It's over there, just before you exit the last gallery.

It was painted at the end of the Great War and I should imagine that many will struggle to see the wood for the trees in this earthy, strongly-designed war picture. It should be said of all the 130 pictures on this National Gallery show...

[Suddenly the small audience become aware of the scope of the space around them. The expanded prospect makes them shift uneasily in their seats as the 1.15pm lecture comes to a resounding end]

...that these British men and women artists do not repeat what has already been said a thousand times and has lost its meaning in the changed times. They are in many cases expressing what has not been attempted before because their experience is drawn from a personal and contemporary situation which has no resemblance to the past. On the other hand...

[she pauses for dramatic and final effect]

...they may feel that even to express the eternal things of the world a new method is required.¹

¹ The script for Mrs Pepys's lecture is based on material taken from original press clippings and reviews published in the *Cape Times Weekend Magazine* and the *Cape Argus* during the time of the exhibition of Contemporary British Paintings and Drawings while at the National Gallery in Cape Town between November, 1947 and January, 1948.



9a.

9a,b,c,d. From the Latin, “facere” (make) and “simile” (like), a **facsimile** is a copy or reproduction of an item of historical value. In an age before popular use of e-mails and internet, the fax machine or “telecopier”, facilitated the transfer of printed material to a connected remote output device. This mode of transfer is still recommended when sending sensitive materials which might be subject to interception. In July, 2012, the existing infrastructure of an exhibition and office space of the Parking Gallery in Johannesburg was used to work through a number of archival materials. Together with an ongoing discussion programme the display grew in size and length.



9d.



764



763



* 16a, 16b. A United States cultural-historical exhibit in Izmir, Turkey, 1956, designed by Esther Witteberg and Henry Gardiner. The main structural system used in this exhibit was a structural steel "mason's" scaffolding. Exhibit panels of braced masonite were hung on the scaffolding by strap iron hooks. Most of the

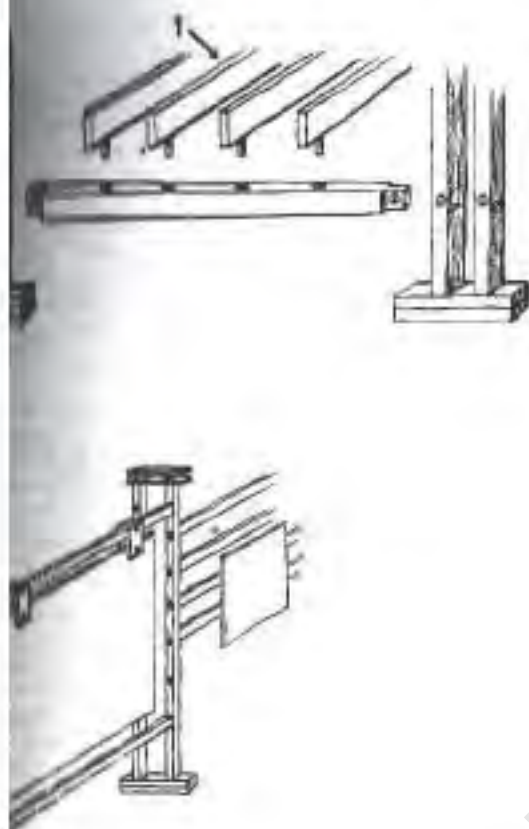
lighting was concealed behind the downward illumination. Photographs by placing horizontal panels in the members of the scaffolding, sized dimensional materials could then be exhibited. (Photos: Henry Gardiner)



17

17. "To Make us Know Here" is exhibit at the American Museum of Natural History, 1957. The same mason's scaffolding was used here as in exhibit (Plates 16a and b), with long directly on the scaffolding. The flag was hung on standard plumber's conduit channel. (Photo: American Museum of Natural History, New York)

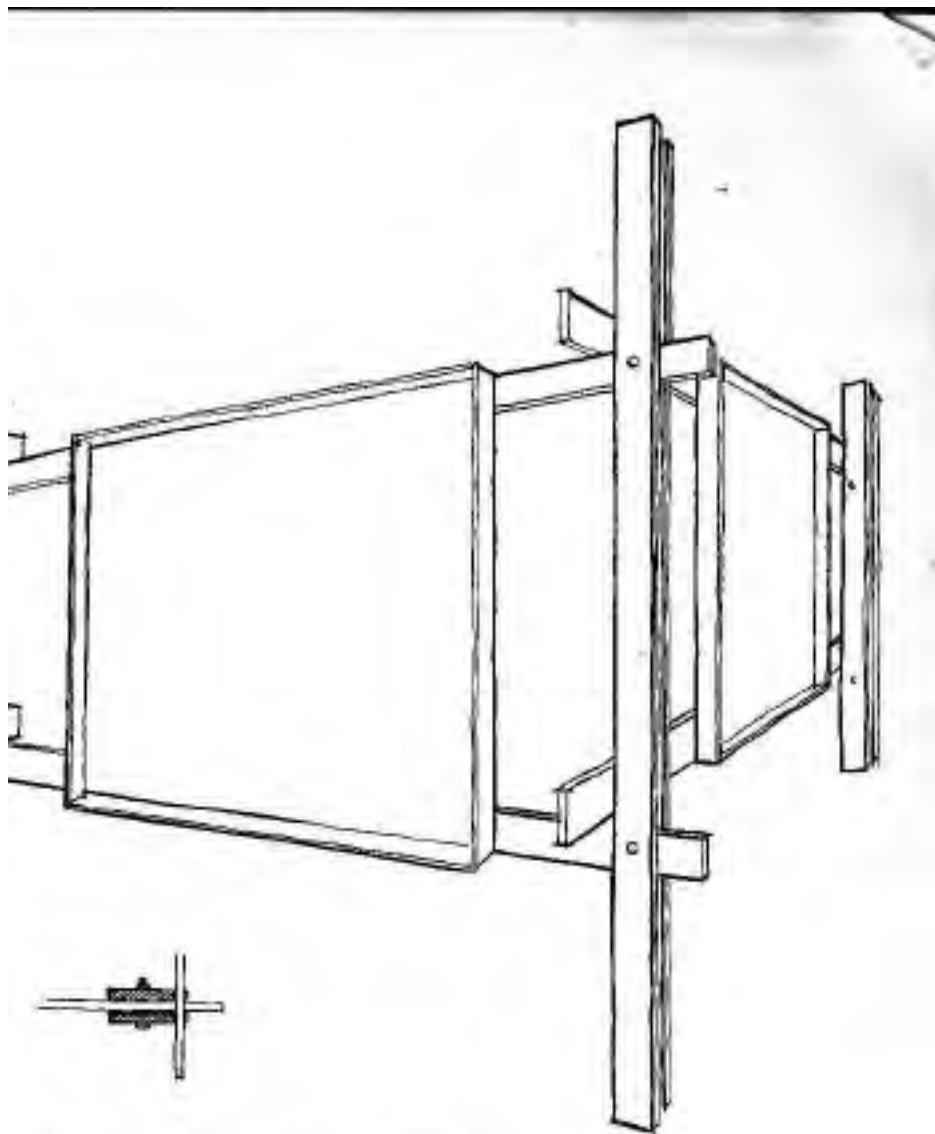
10 Appendix to Temporary and Travelling Exhibitions, 1963. Illustrations include executed travelling and temporary exhibition structures in various contexts.



(1a) H system using a wooden framework; many combinations are possible with this system; 2, this pole can rotate.

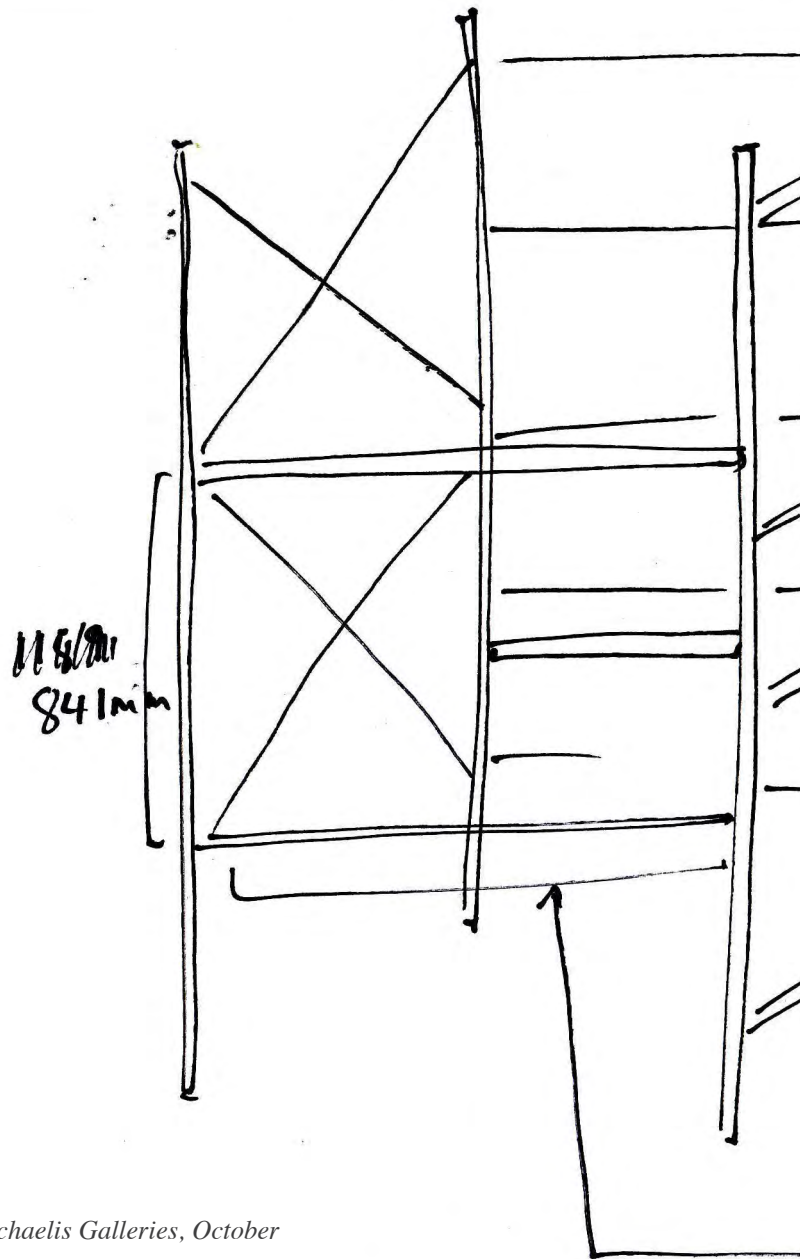


Fig. 3. Wooden exhibit 'system'.

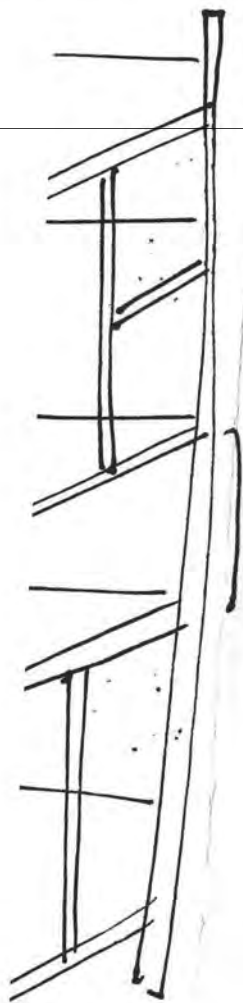


cm² using standard wooden units bolted together.

11. *The Temporary and Travelling Exhibitions manual* contains informative diagrams to guide construction of display units, using cheap materials and basic hanging methods.



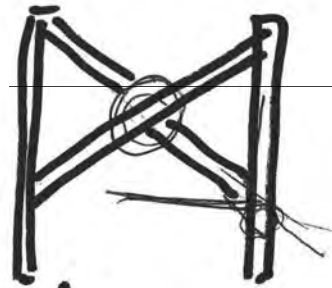
12a. Final presentation at Michaelis Galleries, October 2012.



42 mm



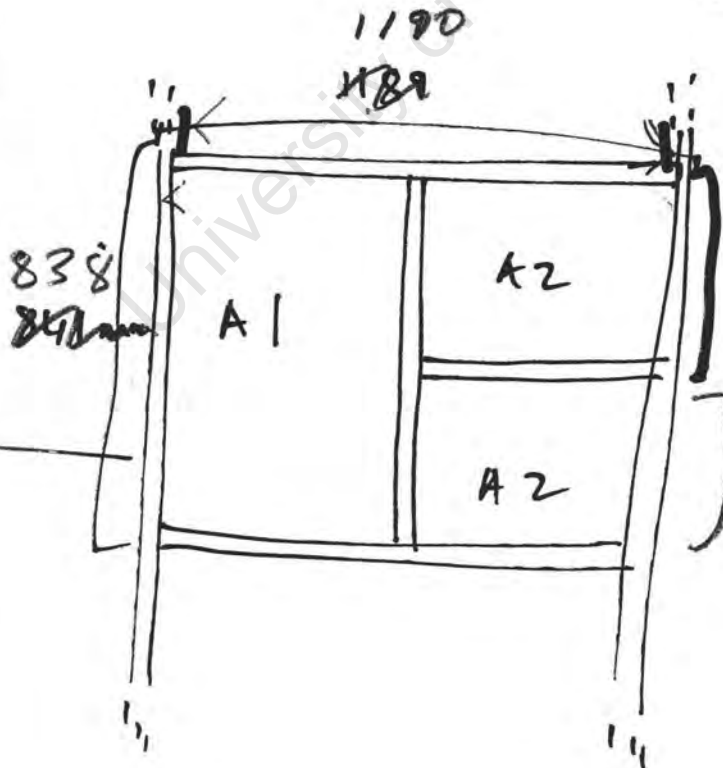
1190
1189



420 mm

$$\begin{array}{r} 419 \\ 21875 \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 16r \\ 16 \end{array}$$



1190
1189

838
842 mm

A1

A2

A2

420 mm

419

University of Cape Town



12d, Permanent Staff, Michaelis Galleries, October 2012. Configurations of museum guards may be found throughout the archival documentation of the British and South African exhibitions. Whether holding paintings in front of selection committees, packing sculptures for shipment or merely watching from a corner, these figures in one sense, people exhibitions by linking the inner workings of a gallery system with its public space. In another sense, they are also framed by their context, becoming part of its aesthetic. The authority they bring lends a travelling show a sense of museal permanence, while also possibly changing the behaviour of the visitor – even if only slightly. For my final exhibition I involved two security guards who were both asked to engage in ‘regular’ organisational gallery activities, whether it be making a cup of tea, or arranging some unweildy assortments of flowers. (Thanks to Matthew King and Nina Liebenberg.)



12b, *Happy Medium*, Michaelis Galleries, October 2012. UNESCO's manual states plainly that warm white fluorescent light should be used for displays in the Northern Hemisphere so as to create a more inviting atmosphere in colder climates. The opposite is true for exhibitions held in the (generally hotter) Southern Hemisphere whereby, it is suggested that a cool white light be used. In conversation with a gallerist some months ago I learned that the best fluorescent lighting usually comes with a mixing of the two kinds of bulbs in the same fitting. Hot and cold. 12c, *Professional Sign*, Michaelis Galleries, October 2012. Daniel Mambu is a permanently employed sign-writer at the Fruit & Veg on Roeland Street, and an artist in his spare time. He interpreted the title text for the exhibition, using a more toned down colour palate than his usual, and introduced a frame.

12d, *Endless Possibilities (pink yard)*, Michaelis Galleries, October 2012. *Taking the Endless Possibilities work from March one step further, this version involved painting a pink band which ran along the wall of the gallery, linking each space to each other. The band width is 91.4cm, or 1 yard (a unit of measurement no longer used in Southern Africa). In terms of the band's height, the mid-point is located just awkwardly below the purported eye-level of the so-called 'average viewer'. The pink yard therefore acts as both a routing and a binding agent – the abruptness of its colour, its sudden start and end, become simultaneously part of the background as well as the subject of focus.* 12e, *Bedroom slippers are comfortable to wear (but they are out of place at a royal reception)*, Michaelis Galleries, October 2012. *This phrase and the sentiment behind it is from an article written by the Cape Argus Art Critic.*

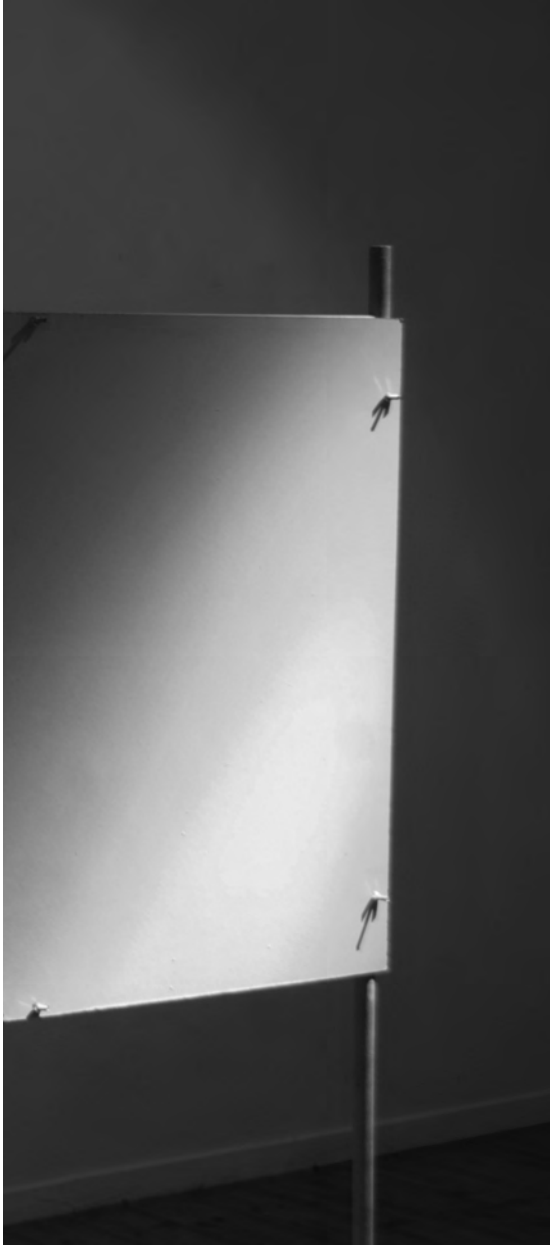
12f, Historical Prelude, Michaelis Galleries, October 2012. This section of the exhibition adopts the method used by the curators of the Exhibition of Contemporary South African Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture at the Tate Gallery in 1948, where to be generous with the British public they decided an historical prelude be incorporated as a means of contextualising the contemporary section. Works from as far back as the time of the Dutch East India Company were included, as well as the classic colonial hunting expeditions captured by Baines. In my exhibition, the only hunting was for a paper trail of the two exhibitions which formed my case study from 1947-9. A small selection of those findings can be found clustered onto the same pink wall which someone once thought to be far too distracting for an exhibition. The fact that they are reproductions is also in keeping with the 'spirit' of travelling exhibitions whereby precious materials were often substituted by copies for safety. Their metaphorical significance extends back to Malraux's Museum Without Walls, challenging the criteria of what designates 'real' historical artefact and a 'valuable' collection.



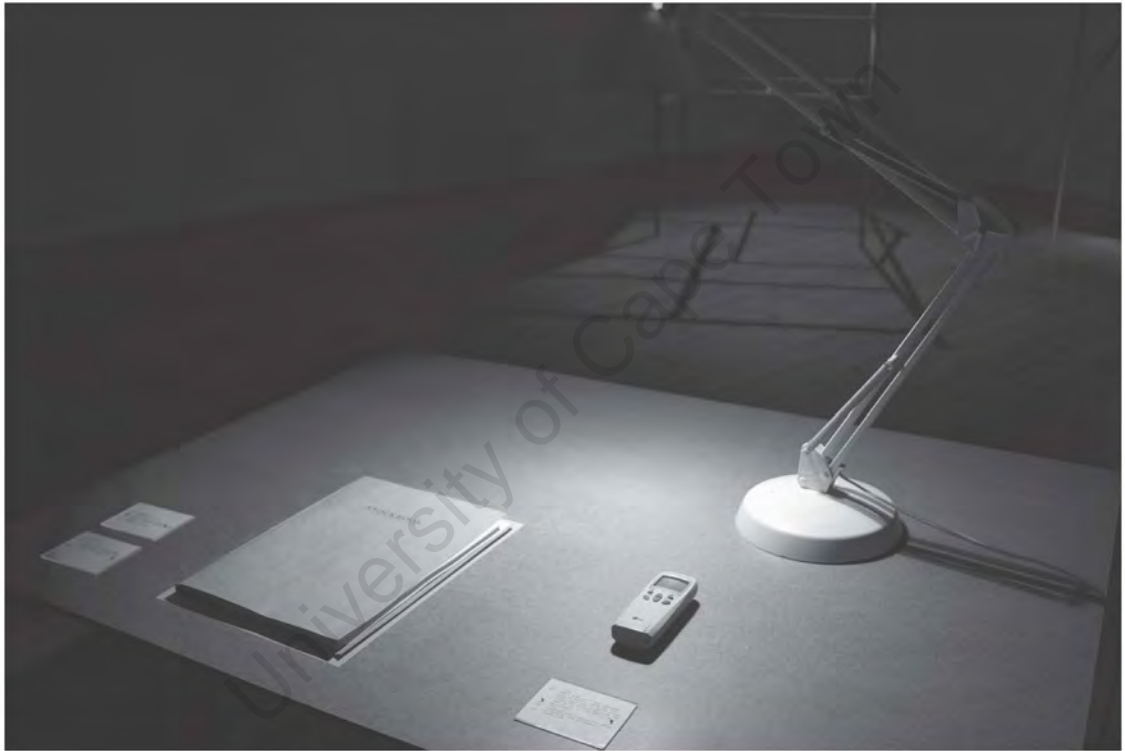
12g, Arrangements, Michaelis Galleries, October 2012. Plants are a feature of every good exhibition. Aren't they? Despite being dotted about UNESCO's illustrations section of good display strategies, foliage is less popular in 'white cube' exhibitions. The status of exhibition plants has become more art historical in fact with their adoption by conceptual artists such as Marcel Broodthaers, who fixed the indoor palm as a sculptural feature of his fictional Museum of Modern Art, Department of Eagles (1968). For Arrangements I asked one of the museum guards to arrange an assortment of mismatched flowers and shrubs – some of them indigenous others considered 'alien' to a South African ecosystem. As the exhibition proceeds, the guard continues to slightly adjust the arrangement, attempting to achieve a more coherent whole of the disparate parts.







12h, *Mason's Scaffolding*, Michaelis Galleries, October 2012. *Based on structures originally designed by Lohar Witteborg and Henry Gardiner for a cultural exposition by the United States in Turkey in 1956, this scaffold display system was intended to be easily transported and built up to accommodate various materials at different heights. These structures are also some of the most naked. They cannot conceal anything. Every panel can be seen from both the front and back, each bolt, each hole – all these elements are exposed. As the dimensions of the scaffolding are not specified by the designers, an A1 (the universal paper size) was used as a basis for marking out the middle panels of each framework. (Thanks to Joshua Butcher for his assistance with the construction.)*



12i, May I wish you a very pleasant trip to Venice, which you will find, thank God, is quite unlike either the picture postcards one sees of it, or like 99% of the paintings. *Michaelis Galleries, October 2012. A postcard from Le Roux Smith Le Roux to John Rothenstein on 11 May 1948.*

12j, Tea with Janet and Denzil Cochrane, *Michaelis Galleries, October 2012. Ouma's economical ice-cream, Ceylon tea, Poole china, newspaper, pink wool, conversation.*



12k. List of title cards, *Michaelis Galleries, October 2012.*

- (a) 2
 - (b) *Permanent Staff*
 - (c) 2012
 - (d) 2 museum attendants, 2 khaki uniforms,
2 driver's caps
-
- (a) R200.00
 - (b) *Professional Sign*
 - (c) 2012
 - (d) Daniel Mambu
 - (e) Chalk
 - (f) (framed) 181x22cm
-
- (a) L18W/640
 - (b) *Happy Medium*
 - (c) 2012
 - (d) Warm and cold fluorescent bulbs
 - (e) Standard
 - (f) 547.863
-
- (a) R6-B1-4
 - (b) *Endless Possibilities (1 yard)*
 - (c) November, 1948
 - (d) Wall colour, Exhibition of Contemporary
Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture, Tate
Gallery, London
 - (e) 91.44cm (1 yard)
-
- (a) 547.863
 - (b) *Historical Prelude*
 - (c) November, 1948-November, 2012
 - (d) Original copies, copied copies, sound, map pins
 - (e) 380x91.44cm (and 64 years)
-
- (a) 1/04/1948
 - (b) *Bedroom slippers are comfortable to wear,
(but they are out of place at a royal reception)*
 - (c) Cape Argus Art Critic
 - (d) South African National Gallery Press Archive

12k. List of title cards cont., *Michaelis Galleries, October 2012.*

- (a) 0695UNES
 - (b) *Mason's Scaffolding*
 - (c) (orig. 1956)
 - (d) Lohar Witteborg and Henry Gardiner
 - (e) Masonite, meranti rake handles and dowels
 - (f) Dimensions variable
-
- (a) BTCCLA002
 - (b) *Stock Book*
 - (c) 2012
 - (d) Clare Butcher
 - (e) Cape liner, British cartridge, archival paper, HG gloss 100gm
 - (f) Dimensions variable
-
- (a) 11548
 - (b) *May I wish you a very pleasant trip to Venice, which you will find, thank God, is quite unlike either the picture postcards one sees of it, or like 99% of the paintings.*
 - (c) 1948
 - (d) Postcard sent from Le Roux Smith Le Roux to John Rothenstein
 - (e) Travelling
-
- (a) T43
 - (b) *Tea with Denzil and Janet Cochrane*
 - (c) 2012
 - (d) Ouma's economical ice-cream, Ceylon tea, Poole china, newspaper, pink wool, conversation

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A note about the paper and typefaces used in this publication:

Stock book cover: Cape Liner

Inside cover: British Cartridge

Text pages: Archival Paper, 90grm

Illustrations and appendix: HG Gloss, 100grm

Titles: Plantagenet Cherokee

Text: Times

University of Cape Town

Clare Butcher, 2012